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Technical and Operational Performance Support Program (TOPS)

Year 3 Annual Progress Report

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TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM (TOPS)

YEAR 3 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

(October 2012-September 2013)

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ACRONYMS

ADRA	*Adventist Development and Relief Agency*	MARKit	*Market Analysis and Response Kit*
AME	*African M&E*	M&E	*Monitoring and Evaluation*
ANRM	*Agriculture and Natural Resource Management*	NALAN	*Nutrition and Agriculture Linkages in Africa Network*
CM	*Commodity Management*	NGO	*Non-Governmental Organization*
CMAM	*Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition*	PAC	*Program Advisory Committee*
		PIA	*Program Improvement Award*
COP	*Chief of Party*	PMP	*Performance Management Plan*
CRS	*Catholic Relief Services*	PR	*Program Result*
DBC	*Designing for Behavior Change*	PRM	*Participatory Rangeland Management*
DCM	*Drought Cycle Management*	PVO	*Private Voluntary Organization*
FACM	*Food Assistance Commodity Management*	RFA	*Request for Applications*
FANTA	*Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance*	RICCAF	*Reseau Intersectoriel pour le Changement de Comportement en Afrique Francophone*
FFP	*Food for Peace*		
FSN	*Food Security and Nutrition*	SBC	*Social and Behavioral Change*
GLEE	*Global Learning and Evidence Exchange*	SPRING	*Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally*
GROW	*Grass Roots building Our Wealth*		
ICB	*Institutional Capacity Building*	TOPS	*Technical and Operational Performance Support*
IPR	*Intermediate Program Result*	USAID	*United States Agency for International Development*
IYCF	*Infant and Young Child Feeding*	WASH	*Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*
KM	*Knowledge Management*	WVI	*World Vision International*

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program** identifies, synthesizes, adapts and shares the highest quality information and tools to build capacity and establish best practices among implementers of USAID/Office of Food for Peace (FFP) development food assistance projects. The TOPS Program, funded by FFP via a five-year[1] Leader with Associate Cooperative Agreement, has a global mandate to foster opportunities for knowledge exchange among practitioners in the diverse and multi-faceted food security community.

TOPS is a consortium project led by Save the Children. Save the Children also provides technical expertise in commodity management, gender, and nutrition and food technology. Additional technical expertise is provided by the primary partners: The CORE Group – knowledge management; Food for the Hungry – social and behavioral change; Mercy Corps – agriculture and natural resource management; and TANGO International – monitoring and evaluation.

This report summarizes activities and achievements in **Year 3** of TOPS implementation, from September 2012 through August 2013.

The TOPS Program is now fully mature and making ***substantial progress in its four results areas*** of knowledge *capture*, knowledge *generation*, knowledge *application* and knowledge *sharing*. TOPS measured its progress against multiple indicators, as presented in the Performance Management Plan. In Year 3, more than half of the indicators were met or exceeded (14 percent and 45 percent, respectively). By the close of the year, TOPS had expended 62 percent of its budget for Years 1 through 3.

TOPS' seven ***Task Forces***—one each for the technical and cross-cutting specialty areas that TOPS addresses—have defined or substantially defined the ***core competencies*** needed for effective food security programming. These form the bases for the development of ***self-assessment modules*** for use by field staff (three such modules were field tested in Year 3), and ***pre- and post-tests*** whose results guide the content and quality control of technical trainings. Task Forces endorsed three new ***technical tools*** in Year 3, bringing the total of TOPS-endorsed tools to 15, and are in the process of creating or modifying 11 more tools that span five specialty areas. TOPS continued to disseminate tools via trainings and meetings, and to make them readily available online.

Year 3 saw important advances in identifying ***promising practices*** in development food assistance programming. TOPS Technical Specialists examined the final evaluation reports of 27 FFP-funded projects and, using carefully chosen criteria, distilled multiple promising practices in maternal and child nutrition, and agriculture and natural resources management (ANRM), cross-cut with gender and SBC practices.

TOPS devoted considerable time and resources to building field staff capacity and hosting knowledge sharing opportunities during Year 3. It held nine ***capacity building workshops*** for more than 300 participants combined, covering topics in ANRM, commodity management (CM), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), nutrition and food technology, and social and behavior change (SBC). Technical Specialists responded to requests from others in the food security community to organize a dozen stand-alone ***presentations***, including webinars and face-to-face gatherings in the Washington, DC, area. TOPS was also frequently invited—beyond anticipated plans—to contribute to events hosted by FFP and other USAID-funded entities, both online and in sites around the world. These contributions were in the form of ***presentations and facilitation*** of sessions. The growing number of these requests indicates that TOPS is increasingly well known and respected as a hub of knowledge within the food security community.

[1] August 13, 2010, through August 12, 2015.

The ***Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network Web Portal***, launched in Year 2, is proving a popular site for implementing PVOs, FFP staff, and academic and research institutions. The site received nearly 33,000 hits in Year 3, or 32 percent above projected target. The portal's four broad functions are all operational: the r*esource library* is home to more than 500 tools, guide and manuals, and the *discussion forum* aspect hosted several successful exchanges during the year. TOPS improved the cohesion and focus of *discussion groups*, and Year 3 saw the Knowledge Management (KM) and SBC Task Forces collaborate to establish and begin populating the *behavior bank* with data from studies across and within technical sectors. More than 1,600 practitioners now subscribe to the FSN' Network's bi-weekly e-newsletter.

TOPS manages a ***Small Grants program*** to encourage PVOs to design, test and document promising practices, tools and guidance, and share them with the food security community. In Year 3, TOPS received and reviewed more grant applications than in previous years—likely due to having increased the funding ceiling on one type of grant and modified the submission schedule for the other—but did not award the expected volume of funding. On one hand, several of the applications received did not merit awards; on the other, bottlenecks in the multi-actor approval system delayed awards. TOPS management negotiated with FFP and Save the Children to streamline the system, and plans to invest additional efforts to market the Small Grants program in Year 4.

TOPS undertook a range of activities in Year 3 in ***direct support to FFP initiatives***. For example, the ANRM team contributed to USAID's ongoing work to develop harmonized agricultural indicators. TOPS partner, TANGO International, contributed to the development of the USAID framework for resilience and facilitated two TOPS-sponsored events to build awareness and gather PVO input into this process. A consultant organized PVO input into the FY14 Request for Applications (RFA) Guidance. The KM team offered advice on improving the user-friendliness of USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse. TOPS CM specialists provided orientation to headquarters staff for a new Title II program in Zimbabwe and traveled to Liberia to provide on-site technical assistance to ongoing Title II programs.

The ***mid-term evaluation***, which took place near the end of Year 3, found that the TOPS Program is contributing to an important ***broadening and deepening of interactions and knowledge-exchange*** among members of the food security community. The evaluation team applied simple coding to qualify the status of TOPS Program indicators, and deemed that progress around 18 indicators was satisfactory. Activities linked to four indicators were ranked as having 'a few concerns.' Two indicators, measuring progress in Small Grants and tools endorsement, were qualified as needing prompt attention. In both cases, TOPS has identified and taken action to improve cumbersome systems and resultant delays.

TOPS, in its position as both hub and engine of knowledge generation and exchange, has mobilized a wide array of stakeholders in the food security community. Active contributors to FSN Network Task Forces in Year 3 included PVOs, global projects, US government agencies, UN agencies, academic and research institutions, and advocacy groups. TOPS offers this diverse population many opportunities to engage and multiple levels of engagement: from following social media to leading a discussion group, from being a listserv recipient to presenting at webinars, meetings and workshops. TOPS' impact is increasing with the increasingly active participation of members of the food security community who contribute to, and learn from, their engagement with the FSN Network.

B. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Project Background and Strategic Objectives

The **Technical and Operational Performance Support** (TOPS) Program identifies, synthesizes, adapts, and shares the highest quality information and tools to build capacity and establish best practices among USAID's development food assistance partners. TOPS is a five-year Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement (August

13, 2010 - August 12, 2015); its global mandate is to enhance opportunities for sharing knowledge and best practices among practitioners in the multifaceted food security community.

In implementing TOPS, Save the Children leads a strong consortium of experienced food security grantees, each of which offers specialized knowledge to the TOPS Program. The principal consortium partners, and their technical specialty areas, are shown in **Figure 1**.

The TOPS Program brings together an experienced and capable program management team; an engaged membership with participation by the majority of USAID's Food for Peace (FFP) grantees; a commitment to efficient, inclusive, and transparent processes; and respected collaborating and resource partners who bring new thinking and new networks to food security and nutrition programming.

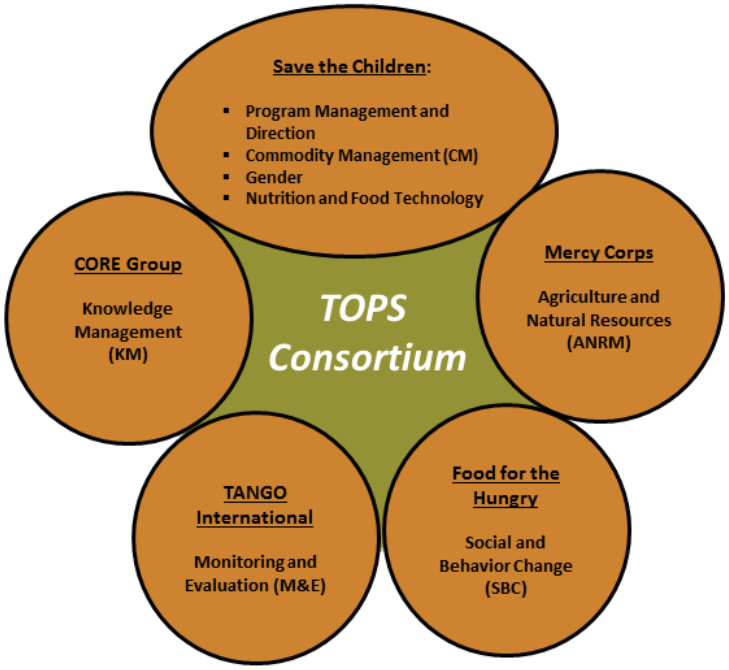


Figure 1: TOPS Consortium partners and specialties

TOPS Strategic Framework

The Strategic Objective for TOPS is:

highest quality information, knowledge, and best practices for improved methodologies in Title II food aid commodity program performance are identified, established, shared, and adapted.

TOPS works towards four Program Results (PR):

PR1: Knowledge Capture. The TOPS Program deploys several approaches to assess and prioritize the knowledge and implementation capacities of the members of the food security community, with their range and diversity of experience and expertise. TOPS identifies the knowledge and skill needs of the community by engaging members through participatory processes and by soliciting their direct input. The needs assessment process provides an opportunity to identify promising tools and practices in current use, and gaps that must be filled to maximize the quality and effectiveness of development food assistance programming.

PR2: Knowledge Generation. The TOPS Program synthesizes and responds to information gained through PR1: Knowledge Capture strategies to produce reliable, high-quality information in formats that are useful to the food security community. The TOPS Team, through the *Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network* Task Forces, identifies, reviews, and modifies (if necessary) promising tools and practices. Information, tools, and approaches are then vetted and disseminated through the FSN Network.

PR3: Knowledge Application. Members of the food security community work in widely different contexts and environments, and address a variety of food security risks. TOPS develops effective and appropriate skill delivery approaches, both traditional and non-traditional, to strengthen food security practitioners' skills. Familiar, on-the-ground training is still the preferred method of skill transfer, according to program participants, but TOPS is testing alternative modes for the many practitioners who cannot access traditional trainings due to cost, distance, time, or other constraints. The goal is to leave sustainable capacity building options in place at TOPS' end.

PR4: Knowledge Sharing. TOPS supports and expands knowledge exchange by creating new physical and virtual community knowledge sharing strategies and venues. The purpose is to strengthen global, regional, and local knowledge sharing and networking. Expanded systems are enabling a greater number of practitioners to participate in creating, testing, and evaluating promising practices and tools on a continual basis. Establishing habits of interaction for knowledge sharing among the food security community will contribute to sustained learning practices beyond the life of TOPS.

While each of the four PR areas produces stand-alone outputs, they are interdependent components of the whole TOPS Program. Activities undertaken in one PR area are integral to achieving results in others. **Figure 3** overleaf summarizes the TOPS Strategic Objective and PRs.

The TOPS Program specializes in seven key areas, three of which are *technical* and four of which are *cross-cutting*. **Figure 2** graphically presents TOPS' seven specialty areas.

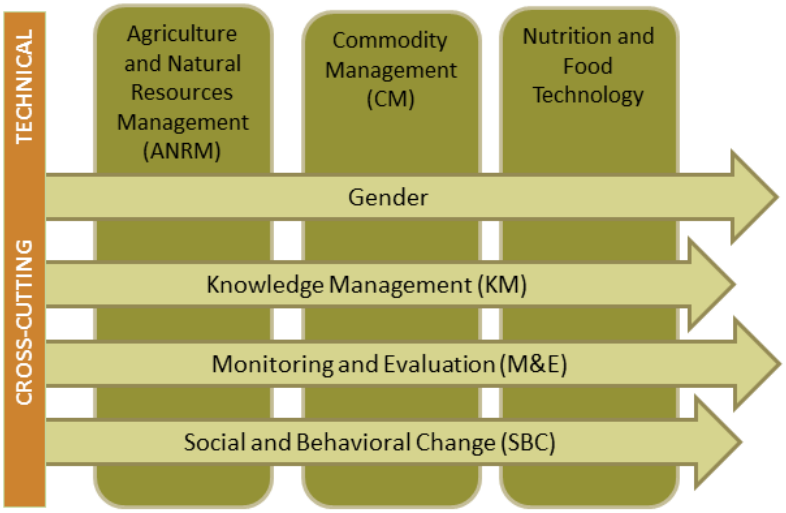


Figure 2. The TOPS Program's seven specialty areas.

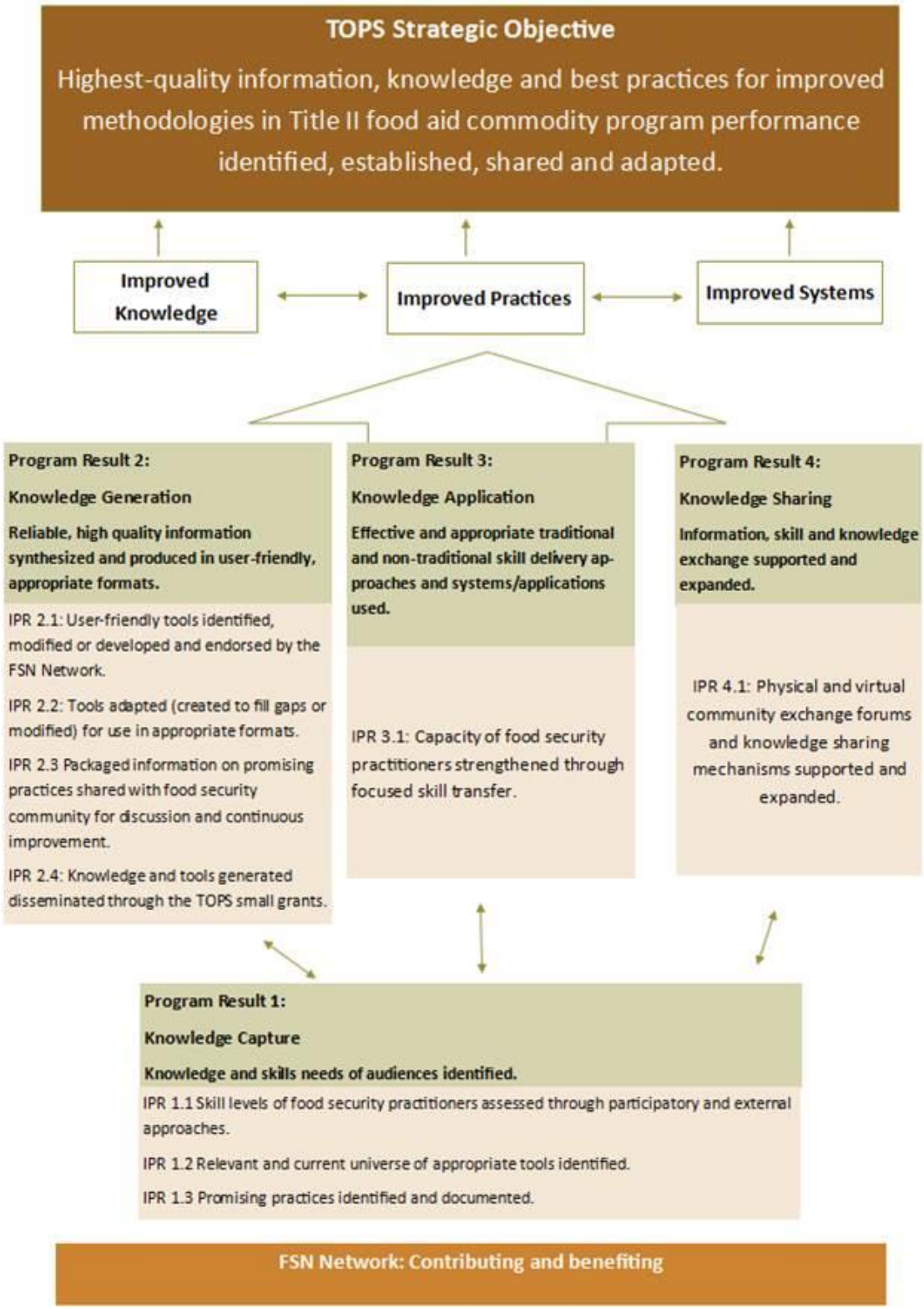
TOPS Primary Strategies

Since its inception in 2010, TOPS has built a network of food security practitioners around the world to identify, analyze, improve, and share information, tools, and promising practices to improve program performance. TOPS uses four fundamental approaches to address the needs of the food security community:

- **A directed program of capacity building activities** for USAID's development food assistance partners, led by TOPS technical staff.
- **An inclusive community of practice** through the FSN Network and technical Task Forces and interest groups, whose membership is open to all USAID grantees and other food security stakeholders.
- **A food security and nutrition Web Portal** (www.fsnnetwork.org), the foundation of the TOPS knowledge sharing system.
- **A small grants program** that promotes the creation, use, and adaptation of capacity building tools, and encourages evaluation and documentation, to build the evidence base as part of TOPS' work to disseminate best practices to food security and nutrition stakeholders (grantees, local NGOs and other partners, as appropriate), with a focus on field-led and collaborative initiatives.

The success of these strategies increases with the active participation of members of the broader, global food security community who contribute to, and learn from, involvement with TOPS.

Figure 3
TOPS Framework



Year 3 Program Highlights

- Core Competencies and Self Assessments

The CM Task Force completed a list of core competencies and a self-assessment module for the position of Commodity Manager in Year 3. This specialty's Task Force, created comparatively late in the TOPS program, is catching up to the level of achievement of other specialty areas in delineating core competencies.

Thirty field staff in Africa filled out the Nutrition and Food Technology self-assessment module. The results were analyzed and presented to members of the Nutrition Task Force; several planned to use the data in their PVOs' planning processes. By Year 3 some 75 M&E managers around the world filled out the M&E self-assessment module; the SBC Task Force also field-tested its module, and found that several modifications were needed to improve the usefulness of results.

- Tools

In Year 3, TOPS endorsed three new tools: one each in ANRM, KM, and Nutrition (in emergencies). Technical Specialists disseminated seven tools in ANRM, Gender, Nutrition and SBC during TOPS learning events that included capacity building workshops in Africa, the regional knowledge sharing event in Washington, DC, and an online Webinar. The year saw important advances in the creation or modification of about a dozen tools in five specialty areas, including field guides for agricultural best practices and minimum standards, and a guide for conducting Trials of Improved Practice. Of particular note was the finalization of the Commodity Management Handbook, a portable and user-friendly reference partially distilled from several existing PVO manuals that, while valuable, tended to gather dust due to their large size and overly technical language. The Commodity Handbook will be widely disseminated in Year 4.

- Promising Practices

Year 3 saw the TOPS review of 27 final evaluation reports of FFP-funded development food assistance projects, with the aim of identifying promising practices in food security programming. By the close of the year, TOPS drafted an initial report on promising practices in ANRM and maternal and child nutrition, cross-cut with gender and SBC. TOPS, via consortium partner TANGO International, facilitated two events in contribution to USAID's examination of promising practices that can support the development of a resilience measurement framework.

- Small Grants

The TOPS Micro Grant cap was increased in Year 3, from $20,000 to $50,000, and the number of applications leapt to 18, from five in Year 2. Ten applications had advanced close to the approval stage by the end of the year. Meanwhile, five Program Improvement Awards (PIA) approved in Q1 began implementation. No additional PIA were approved in Year 3. TOPS worked with appropriate stakeholders throughout the year to streamline the small grants approval process, and to improve quality and increase quantity of applications.

- Training

TOPS held nine sector-specific training workshops in Year 3, reaching more than 300 participants in Central America, South Asia, and East, West and Southern Africa. Topics ranged from drought cycle management (ANRM) to quantitative data analysis (M&E), from commodity supply chain (CM) to designing for behavior change (SBC). While the training topics were sector-specific, TOPS nonetheless took opportunity for collaboration between specialty areas. The Nutrition Technical Specialist, for example, was invited by her SBC counterpart to deliver training in Liberia that combined behavior change with technical topics such as infant and young child feeding (IYCF). The same workshop also touched upon the integration of nutrition and agricultural programming.

- The FSN Network and Knowledge Sharing Mechanisms

TOPS uses several mechanisms to engage the food security community, including the *Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network* and specialty-specific *Task Forces* made up of TOPS Technical Specialists and peers from PVOs, academic institutions, government agencies and other key entities. As always, Task Forces worked intersectorally where efficient and effective (for example, the ANRM and Nutrition groups worked, in Year 3, to develop a tool on integrating agriculture and nutrition, with assistance from Gender and SBC Task Force members), and provide technical input to non-TOPS organizations (for example, the M&E Task Force to the Tufts Food Aid Quality Review, and the ANRM and M&E Task Forces to FFP's comprehensive list of indicators).

TOPS' *Web Portal*, with its four components that promote and facilitate knowledge sharing, saw a significant increase in visitors and downloads during Year 3. Subscriptions to the FSN Network E-Newsletter rose by 39 percent over Year 2, and the Newsletter's content and presentation were improved. TOPS' Fourth *Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting* was held in Washington, DC, during Year 3; the Fifth such meeting was scheduled to take place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, but was canceled due to political turmoil.

...TOPS' support to single-topic knowledge sharing meetings and contributions to other organizations' events during Year 3. Invitations and requests for such assistance far exceeded those received in previous years, and indeed far exceeded targets.

Perhaps the most important story in this category was TOPS' support to single-topic knowledge sharing meetings and contributions to other organizations' events during Year 3. Invitations and requests for such assistance far exceeded those received in previous years, and indeed far exceeded targets. The TOPS team, with support from members of the FSN Network, was able to flexibly respond to stakeholder requests, including but not limited to:

- Facilitation of the USAID Webinar on Environmental Enteropathy and WASH, including how WASH can be integrated into USAID nutrition and other programs.
- Presentations on measuring resilience, and on the effects of shocks on agricultural-based livelihoods, adaptive capacity of agricultural and livestock-based livelihood systems, and the role of social capital in managing risk.
- Design and facilitation of a consultation with Title II implementers to solicit their input for improving future RFAs and country guidance for Multi Year Development Food Assistance Programs.
- Collaboration with the SPRING Project to facilitate nutrition training to agriculture specialists during three regional Nutrition Global Learning and Evidence Exchange events (N-GLEE).
- Presentation to PVO food security stakeholders of content from Gender Global Learning and Evidence Exchange (GLEE) event.
- Facilitation of multiple stakeholder meetings for consultation on FFP M&E indicators, including support for PVO consultation by the Tufts Food Aid Quality Review team.

- Field and Regional Networking

In Year 3, TOPS migrated the existing regional interest groups to the Web Portal, and rebranded them as Discussion Groups. Further, TOPS worked to foster a greater sense of community and level of activity within active groups. At the close of the year, five online Discussion Groups were engaged in 43 online discussions.

- Mid-Term Evaluation

TOPS' mid-term evaluation took place in Year 3, and was accomplished via document review and extensive interviews with TOPS participants and stakeholders. The evaluation reported positive observations on TOPS achievements in improving (both in breadth and depth) interactions and exchanges among members of the food security community. The evaluation's several recommendations to improve certain elements of the TOPS program will be carried out in Year 4.

C. TOPS PROGRAM RESULTS AND PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

PR1: Knowledge Capture. Knowledge and skill needs of audiences identified.

The primary actors in identifying the knowledge and skill needs of the food security community are members of TOPS' seven Task Forces, one for each technical and cross-cutting area. Members are drawn from PVOs that implement USAID development food assistance projects and other key stakeholders in the food security community.

Each Task Force has been charged with defining sets of minimum core competencies for field staff in its specialty area. The core competencies then form the foundation of several important TOPS mechanisms for assessing and building capacity:

- Specialty-specific modules that will form the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*
- Identification or modification/creation of tools to help field staff implement effective programming
- Pre- and post-tests linked to capacity building workshops
- Follow-up with training participants to assess skills transfer (scheduled for Year 4)

IPR 1.1: Skill levels of food security practitioners *assessed* through participatory and external approaches.

Core Competencies for Field Staff

Most Task Forces completed or substantially completed their definitions of core competencies in Years 1 and 2 of the TOPS program. The notable exception is the CM Task Force, formed near the end of Year 2. Members of this Task Force defined core competencies for the key position of Commodity Manager during Year 3.

The lists of core competencies for each technical and cross-cutting area are extensive. TOPS Technical Specialists continuously seek to limit the number of core competencies, without losing focus on critical skills.

Agriculture & Natural Resource Management

The ANRM Task Force agreed on a final list of core competencies at the end of Year 2. In Year 3, this list was used to assess interest and needs to guide the development of technical capacity building workshop sessions and to pinpoint key areas for tool identification and development.

Commodity Management

In Year 3, the CM Task Force developed core competencies for the position of Commodity Manager, finalizing a list of more than 50 required skills spread across ten knowledge areas:

1. Commodity Management Concepts
2. Logistics Network Design
3. System Set-up
4. Warehouse Operations
5. Transport management
6. Distribution Management
7. Inventory Management and Control
8. Staff Management, Capacity Assessment, Coaching & Mentoring
9. Port operations
10. Monetization

Multiple sources of input contributed to the development of the core competences, including key participants during CM capacity building workshops in Guatemala, Niger and Uganda in Year 3. The CM Task Force members expanded upon a draft list with further discussion, resulting in unanimous endorsement.

In Q4 of Year 3, CM Task Force members began to draft a set of core competencies for the position of Warehouse Manager, to be completed in Year 4.

Gender

The Gender Task Force drafted an outline for core competencies in Year 2. In Year 3, a list of key categories for core competency areas was finalized and discussion began around the specific skills to be included in each category. Work will continue in Year 4 to finalize details, with revisions anticipated as FFP's expectations around gender integration in development food assistance programs are clarified.

Knowledge Management

KM is a cross-cutting issue and an area of activity that is often (appropriately) embedded in the jobs of management staff and handled at an organizational level. For this reason, defining core competencies and conducting self-assessments, as TOPS is doing for other technical sectors, is not relevant for individual field staff. Instead, the KM Task Force focused on identifying promising practices for capturing, sharing and applying program learning in the food security community. A Year 2 review of KM practices at PVO headquarters yielded valuable insights into promising practices, and in Year 3 the KM Team packaged these practices into a draft tool: '*Fifteen Ways to Create an Environment of Inquiry at Your Organization*.'

Monitoring & Evaluation

In Year 3, the M&E Task Force made minor revisions to the core competencies after extensive field-testing of the self-assessment module for M&E. The TOPS' M&E Specialist subsequently revised the survey tools in accordance with the new core competencies and designed the survey templates. The tools will be pilot-tested before roll out in Year 4.

Nutrition & Food Technology

Core competencies in Nutrition & Food Technology, finalized in Year 2, were field-tested in Year 3 through use of the draft nutrition module for the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit*. Field-testing showed that almost all the core competencies were of use for field staff, and some minor modifications were made for clarity.

Social & Behavioral Change

The SBC Task Force developed core competencies for field staff in Year 1 of the TOPS Program. Activity in Years 2 and 3 focused on use of the list of core competencies to field-test a self-assessment module in SBC skills.

TOPS Toolkit for Self-Assessment in Core Competencies

Each TOPS Task Force uses its defined core competencies to create a module or modules for the planned *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*. Field staff can use the self-assessment modules to rate their capacity according to defined core competencies within each specialty area, and organizations can use the results to plan training and other skills-building activities. The TOPS Program also uses self-assessment results to inform its capacity building activities. In Year 3, the Task Forces for M&E, Nutrition and Food Technology, and SBC field-tested their self-assessment modules.

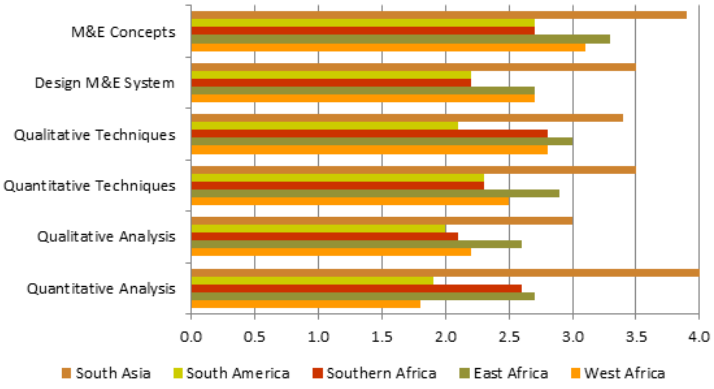
The TOPS ***ANRM*** team drafted an ANRM self-assessment module at the end of Year 3 based on the core competency list it defined at the end of Year 2. The Task Force initiated discussion as to whether the list of core competencies should be subdivided by areas of distinct responsibilities for project implementation. This discussion will be finalized, the self-assessment module modified as appropriate, and extensive field-testing will be done in Year 4.

A sub-group of ***CM*** Task Force members developed the self-assessment module for the position of Commodity Manager after the core competencies for that position were finalized. The larger Task Force then reviewed the tool and recommended it for field testing. Four Commodity Managers from four organizations (two each in Asia and Africa) tested the self-assessment module and provided feedback which will be incorporated in Year 4.

The task of using the core competencies to develop a ***gender*** self-assessment module is scheduled for Year 4.

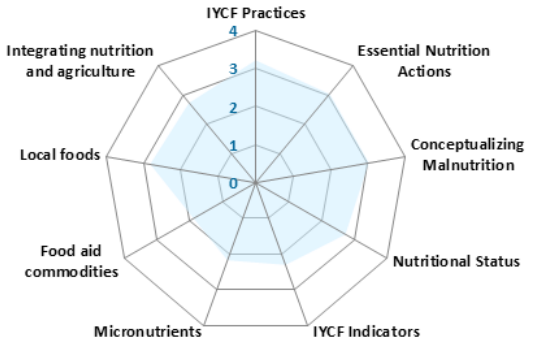
Field-testing of the draft ***M&E*** self-assessment module was begun in Year 2 and continued throughout the first half of Year 3. More than 75 M&E managers and field staff from all regions targeted for FFP assistance have filled out the draft module; **Figure 4** shows results, in bar graph form, of M&E *managers'* scores for selected competencies, by region. Due to staff transition, any modification of the module based on the results from field-testing will be done in Year 4.

Figure 4: Average Self-Assessment Scores, Selected M&E Core Competencies (Managers)



The draft ***Nutrition and Food Technology*** module for the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit* was field-tested for the first time in Year 3 by 30 field staff, most of whom oversee maternal and child health and nutrition components of FFP-funded development food assistance projects in Southern and (Anglophone) West African countries. Field staff took an average of 20 to 30 minutes to fill out the self-assessment tool and had only minor suggestions for clarification of a few core competencies. The field-test results were analyzed, compared to pre-test scores from TOPS technical capacity building workshops in nutrition, and shared with the Nutrition and Food Technology Task Force. (An overview of average scores by category of core competencies is presented in **Figure 5**, while **Attachment 5** contains the complete self-assessment results that were shared with Task Force members). The Task Force found the self-assessment information useful; members from World Vision International (WVI) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) West Africa Region stated they planned to use this information during their next internal strategic planning processes.

Figure 5: Average Self-Assessment Scores, Selected Nutrition Core Competency Categories



KEY for Figures 4 and 5

1 = I know nothing about this subject.
2 = I have moderate knowledge but need more to be able to explain clearly.
3 = I feel sufficiently knowledgeable but need more knowledge to train others.
4 = I feel sufficiently knowledgeable and can train/have trained others.

After field-testing a self-assessment module in ***SBC*** core competencies in Year 3, the SBC Task Force identified several needed changes. Notably, the module is overly long, and respondents tended to mark the same answer for many questions rather than take time to reflect on each question. Responses thus tended to cluster at

the same level of ability on nearly every topic, and it was not possible to pinpoint areas of strength or weakness in any meaningful way. The SBC Task Force will revise and then extensively test the self-assessment module in Year 4.

Technical Assessment of Skills among Field Practitioners

TOPS conducts pre- and post-tests in conjunction with all its training activities, and these tests center on the core competencies identified within each technical and cross-cutting area. A key indicator in TOPS' Performance Management Plan (PMP) tracks data and achievements in this regard, notably increases in knowledge as demonstrated in post-tests. Test data are analyzed and summary reports created that help TOPS to:

- Assess the effectiveness of trainings and inform participants of results
- Improve future training designs
- Raise awareness in the food security community of typical staff strengths and weaknesses in core competency areas.

Data gathered via the TOPS self-assessment toolkit modules will feed into the design of pre- and post-tests, actual application of which is further discussed in PR3 below.

PR2: Knowledge Generation. Reliable, high-quality information synthesized and produced in user-friendly, appropriate formats.

TOPS Activities Threaded through PR1: Knowledge Capture *and* PR2: Knowledge Generation

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Although categorized under separate PRs, the work that TOPS does to identify (PR1) and fill (PR2) gaps in appropriate tools for development food security practitioners are logically linked and thus treated together in this section. The TOPS team, in collaboration with the Task Forces, uses several strategies to identify and fill gaps: they evaluate and endorse existing tools; modify existing tools to better meet needs; or create new tools where none exist but where the need is evident. TOPS then disseminates tools through numerous channels, including training workshops, non-traditional training events such as Webinars, knowledge sharing events, and the FSN Network Web Portal.

TOOLS: Knowledge Capture and Knowledge Generation

- **IPR 1.2: Relevant and current universe of appropriate tools (and gaps in tools) identified.**
- **IPR 2.1: User-friendly tools identified, modified or developed, and endorsed by the FSN Network.**
- **IPR 2.2: Tools adapted (created to fill gaps or modified) for use in appropriate formats.**

Tools endorsed by TOPS

In Years 1 and 2, the FSN Network Task Forces supported by TOPS formally endorsed or recommended 12 tools. In Year 3, three additional tools were endorsed or recommended for a total of 15 tools,[2] and, TOPS continued to

[2] Also, an improvement to a previously endorsed tool was made (see *Supporting Communities of Practice*, in Table 1).

disseminate awareness of all but two of these endorsed tools[3] through the program's multiple communication channels: the FSN Network e-newsletter, the Web Portal, Task Force meetings, knowledge sharing events, and technical capacity building workshops.

TABLE 1
Tools Endorsed in Y3

Title of Tool	*Source*
ANRM	
Integrating Very Poor Producers into Value Chains	Developed by World Vision, second edition 2013. Endorsed by ANRM Task Force in Year 3.[4]
KM	
Supporting Communities of Practice: A TOPS Quick Guide to Linking Development Practitioners	Developed by TOPS and endorsed in Year 2. In Year 3, it was broadened to provide guidance for the many ways in which knowledge can be shared by practitioners and the name was changed (previously, '*A Quick Guide to Supporting Online Communities*').
Designing Participatory Meetings and Brown-Bags: A TOPS Quick Guide to Linking Development Practitioners	Drafted by TOPS in Year 2 and completed in Year 3.
Nutrition & Food Technology	
Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM): A rapid start-up resource for emergency nutrition personnel	In Year 2, with partial support from TOPS, Save the Children's Emergency Nutrition Unit developed a toolkit that gathered adjunct materials needed to rapidly and effectively establish CMAM programming to address IYCF in the context of rapid onset emergencies. This tool was added to the list of TOPS recommended tools in Year 3.

Identify gaps among tools and fill gaps

An important, ongoing TOPS strategy, in conjunction with the TOPS-supported FSN Network Task Forces, is to identify tool gaps and fill them. As such, Year 3 efforts went towards filling gaps identified in Years 1 and 2 (**Table 2**). At the close of Year 3, and partly in response to early findings of the mid-term evaluation of the TOPS Program (see Program Management section), the Task Forces increased efforts to suggest how gaps could be filled through PVO application to the TOPS Small Grants Program.

Table 2
Tools in Process of Modification or Creation to Fill Identified Gaps

Title of Tool	*Source and Modification Activity*
ANRM	
TOPS ANRM Technical Guides. Five short, topic-specific guides: 1. Farmer field schools 2. Financial planning for small farmers 3. Agriculture-nutrition integration 4. Conservation agriculture 5. Post-harvest	During Year 3, gaps in several core competency areas were identified for short, field-relevant topic-specific guides summarizing best practices, minimum standards, and key resources. Five guides were drafted in Year 3; these will be reviewed and finalized in Year 4. Sections on accounting and profit analysis from a tool developed by Mercy Corps in 2011, *Farming as a Business Extension Tool,* partially contributed to the development of these guides.

[3] Two tools previously endorsed by Task Forces were not further disseminated in Year 3: *Positive Deviance/Hearth: A Resource Guide for Sustainably Rehabilitating Malnourished Children* (CORE Group 2002), based on findings and recommendations of the FAFSA-2 report, and an *Indicator Performance Tracking* tool (shared by CRS) that was found to need more detailed guidance prior to further dissemination.

[4] Per the TOPS Year 2 Work Plan, Year 3 review of a tool from the International Labour Organisation, *Value Chain Development for Decent Work: A guide for development practitioners, government and private sector initiatives*, was planned. However, Task Force members suggested this World Vision document be prioritized in Year 3 because its field-based focus is particularly appropriate for vulnerable/poor farmer-producers.

Title of Tool	Source and Modification Activity
Seed Systems	In Year 3, CRS submitted an application for a Micro Grant to the TOPS Small Grants Program, proposing to revise previously developed modules on seed systems to be applicable for use in development food assistance projects. Likely to be approved early in Year 4.
CM	
Commodity Management Handbook	The CM team developed this tool in Year 3. It will be finalized for production in Q1 of Year 4 and disseminated widely.
Warehouse Staff Safety Guide	The CM Task Force identified this as a gap. Project Concern International applied for a TOPS small grant to develop this guide. If approved early in Year 4 as anticipated, Task force members will review and field-test the guide in Year 4.
Fraud Risk Assessment Tools	Multiple tools developed by the *Association of Certified Fraud Examiners* for the for-profit sector will be reviewed in Year 4 and customized to fit the needs for commodity management in Title II programs.
KM	
15 Steps to Create an Environment of Inquiry at Your Organization	This tool was drafted in Year 3 based on key KM practices identified from a Year 2 survey on knowledge sharing practices at the headquarters of PVOs implementing food security programming. The guide will be completed and disseminated in Year 4.
M&E	
Preparing for an Evaluation: Guidelines and tools for pre-evaluation planning	Identified as a gap in Year 3 and useful (albeit partial) information was located in two tools that CRS developed in 2008 under a previous USAID institutional capacity building (ICB) grant: *M&E Module: Guidelines and tools for pre-evaluation planning* and *Managing and implementing an evaluation.* In Year 4, the TOPS M&E Technical Specialist, with input from TANGO International, will draft additional material and presented to the Task Force for input, endorsement.
M&E Guide for Practitioners Working on Title II Projects	Tools by ADRA, Mercy Corps, CRS, ACDI/VOCA, IFAD and others–many developed individually under previous ICB grants–are identified. Modification to fill gaps and update and align with new FFP M&E policy will be completed in Year 4 for Task Force review and endorsement.
Nutrition & Food Technology	
Learning from the Trials of Improved Practices method: Guide to conducting Trials of Improved Practice (TIPs) for TOPS to build BCC capacity and change IYCF practices	The TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist will finalize a guide based upon field-testing by FFP-funded projects in Madagascar and Malawi, for further replication and field-testing in Year 4.[5] The guide will be presented to the Task Force and to external stakeholders as a Technical Advisory Group for review.
Supervising the quality of anthropometric measurement of height	Finalization and Task Force review and endorsement are pending final review to ensure harmonization with the anticipated update and revision by the FANTA-III Project of the *Anthropometric Indicators Measurement Guide*, last revised in 2003.
Training package for hand-calculation of the Minimum Acceptable Diet indicator	This tool was drafted and field-tested in Year 3 and will be reviewed by relevant Task Forces (Nutrition, M&E) in Year 4.

Examples of tools for review in Year 4

TOPS Technical Specialists, in collaboration with Task Forces, develop and maintain a list of tools that may fill recognized gaps. Tools of particular interest that Task Forces may review in Year 4 are:

- *The Five Skills Sets for Farmers* series was developed by CRS through an ICB Grant in 2006 and improved via collaboration with multiple organizations in 2009. This toolkit takes an integrated and sequential approach to strengthening farmers' capacity to link with markets and manage their resources.
- An *M&E Training Facilitator's Guide* was drafted by TANGO International in Year 3.

[5] Draft guidance for the training and fieldwork was drawn from *Designing for Dialogue*, prepared for the Health and Human Resources Analysis Project by Kate Dickin and Marcia Griffiths, The Manoff Group and Ellen Piwoz, Support for Analysis and Research in Africa project/Academy for Educational Development in June 1997.

Additional strategies to disseminate useful tools

TOPS Technical Specialists draw upon resources and tools beyond those prioritized for Task Force collaboration to develop capacity building workshop agendas and coordinate technical sessions for the FSN Network annual knowledge sharing events. Some of the tools disseminated through these channels in Year 3 are found in **Table 3**.

Table 3
Tools Disseminated through TOPS Events in Y3

Tool Title	Source/Authors	Use by TOPS in Y3
ANRM		
What is DCM? Integrating DCM into Programming: A Series of Briefs for Practitioners.	Oxfam	Shared with participants of the ANRM/DCM capacity building workshop in Ethiopia
Participatory Impact Assessment: A Guide for Practitioners.	Tufts University A Catley, J Burns, D Abebe, O Suji.	Shared with participants in the ANRM/Participatory Rangeland Management capacity building workshop in Ethiopia
More Food for Thought: Benefits and Costs of Supplementary Cattle Feeding During Drought.	Pastoralist Livelihoods Initiative Ethiopia. Policy Brief. 2008. Feinstein Int'l Center and Tufts University (funded by USAID)	
Arid Waste? Reassessing the value of dryland pastoralism.	International Institute for Environment and Development Briefing Paper, June 2009	
Impact of a Commercial Destocking Relief Intervention in Moyale District, Southern Ethiopia.	Feinstein Int'l Center and Tufts University (funded by USAID). D Abebe, A Cullis, A Catley, Y Aklilu, G Mekonnen, Y Ghebrechirstos	
Gender		
Gender Analysis, Assessment, and Audit Manual and Toolkit	ACDI/VOCA	This tool was first shared publicly at the Designing for Gender Integration session of the TOPS Fourth FSN Network Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting in Washington, DC
Joint Nutrition and SBC		
Brown Bag Online Meeting: The HUG Your Baby Approach to Building Parenting and Caregiver Skills	HUG Your Baby	TOPS organized a presentation on maternal confidence and better understanding of babies' cues for successful breastfeeding, presented by Jan Tedder, Founder of HUG Your Baby, at the TOPS Fourth FSN Network Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting in Washington, DC. TOPS then made a Webinar presentation in Q4.

PROMISING PRACTICES: Knowledge Capture and Knowledge Generation

- **IPR 1.3: Promising practices identified and documented.**
- **IPR 2.3: Packaged information on promising practices shared with food security community for discussion and continuous improvement.**

The identification of promising practices in development food assistance programming is a continuous activity, which TOPS Technical Specialists and Task Force members pursue via a) review of existing documentation, b) special activities within the TOPS-supported FSN Network, c) personal contacts and regional/in-country activities,

d) representation and participation in other networks, and e) the TOPS Small Grants program. Year 3 saw important advances in the identification and evaluation of promising practices, especially in the technical areas of ANRM and maternal and child nutrition, cross-cut with gender and SBC.

Review development food assistance project final evaluation reports to Identify and share promising practices

In Year 3, the TOPS Program undertook a review of all available final evaluation reports[6] from FFP-funded development food assistance projects. The aim was *to identify promising practices in effective food security programming*, thereby establishing a basis for discussion among food security community members, and leading to consensus on promising practices.

The TOPS team identified the 27 food assistance projects whose final evaluation reports were readily available through USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse or through partners and collaborators of the TOPS Program. The 27 projects had been implemented by 13 PVOs (alone, in partnership or in consortium) in 14 countries. After all Technical Specialists read all 27 evaluation reports, they discarded 13 projects that did *not* demonstrate (a) measurable reduction in child stunting from baseline to final evaluation, and (b) improvements in many intermediate-level impact and outcome indicators. The team then re-examined the 14 remaining reports and developed a list of promising practices that met several criteria (see text box below).

TOPS drafted a first report that presents promising practices identified in maternal and child nutrition and/or ANRM. Cross-cutting gender and SBC aspects are included as relevant. The report—and a second report on promising practices in water, sanitation and hygiene to be prepared in Year 4—is intended as a starting point for further comment and input. In Year 4, the promising practices will be the basis of discussion and consensus-building with the food security community during a variety of TOPS-hosted events throughout the year.

TOPS considers the review and initial papers as a strong starting point. It has invited PVOs and others to submit any final evaluation, special study or documentation of a FFP-funded development food assistance project that highlights a promising practice for review, and encouraged them submit a concept note to the TOPS Small Grants program for any potential promising practice they would like to field-test and/or document.

Criteria used to identify promising practices:

- Improvements for intermediate-level indicators were reported, as would be expected if there was a probable causal link between the practice and the reduction in stunting achieved;
- Evaluators highlighted the practice(s) as promising in the final report;
- Report text highlighted the practice(s) based on project results and comments from project beneficiaries during focus groups conducted during final evaluation;
- Project conducted and documented special monitoring efforts;
- Information in the report concurs with the expertise of relevant TOPS technical specialist(s);
- Practice aligns with state-of-the-art practices or the latest findings of the academic research community.

Identify and share promising practices in use of a resilience measurement framework

The TOPS Program, with leadership provided by the president of TOPS' partner TANGO International, has continued to contribute to the overarching and on-going work within USAID to look at promising practices that can feed into the development of a resilience measurement framework. Two events on this topic were facilitated by TANGO International with TOPS support: *Measuring Resilience for Food Security* (April), and *Building Adaptive Capacity and Resilience of Agricultural-based Livelihoods* (May). Both events were received enthusiastically with strong participation (50 and 27 attendees, respectively) and representation (17 and 19 organizations, respectively) from within the food security community (see also Table 7 in PR4). This contribution by TOPS has been critical to playing a role within the broader goals of the USAID Forward strategy.

[6] For evaluations conducted between FY2006 an FY2010.

Additional strategies to identify promising practices

In Year 3, TOPS Technical Specialists for technical and cross-cutting areas that were unable to identify, from the review of final evaluation reports, a strong list of pertinent promising practices began to strategize and plan for additional ways to identify such practices in their specialty areas. These strategies, which include those mentioned below, will be expanded upon in Year 4:

- Identify promising practices through Task Force collaboration and field contacts, both formal (such as through survey) and informal,
- Continue to promote use of the Web-based Behavior Bank to gather SBC information (*http://fsnnetwork.org/behavior-bank*), and
- Promote documentation of promising practices through the TOPS Small Grants Program (see IPR 2.4).

IPR 2.4: Knowledge and tools generated and disseminated through the TOPS Small Grants.

The TOPS Small Grants program helps organizations design, test and share promising practices, tools, guidance and skills that can help others in the food security community design and implement stronger programs. The Small Grants program consists of two types of awards: the Micro Grant Award and the PIA. Through the TOPS FSN Network, organizations receiving these awards are able to disseminate and share findings from their projects with the broader food security community.

Micro Grant Awards

TOPS ***Micro Grants*** are designed to build sustainable high quality knowledge and technical skills within FFP grantees, implementers, partners and collaborators. Improving and strengthening technical and managerial skills in the overall community of practice is important for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of development food assistance programs. The emphasis in Micro Grant Awards is on designing innovative approaches, strengthening existing best practices and skills, disseminating promising new practices, and reaching a wide audience of practitioners.

In Year 3, TOPS revised its Micro Grant RFA to *increase the maximum award amount* from $20,000 to $50,000. This may account for the increased number of submissions: from five in Year 2, to 18 in Year 3. Of these 18, TOPS did not recommend seven of the 18 applications for funding and removed them from consideration. At the end of Year 3, ten of the remaining applications were in process to be approved and implemented in Year 4. One organization withdrew its application.

TOPS received most of the 18 Micro Grant proposals in Year 3's last quarter. In Year 4, TOPS will engage in ongoing promotion—via Task Forces and the FSN Network, and at technical training and learning events—to encourage a more continual application flow throughout the year.

Program Improvement Awards

The TOPS ***PIA*** are designed for food security and nutrition implementing organizations to conduct and/or document innovative, best practice-focused activities, operations research, or pilot programs to test or strengthen approaches for efficient, effective delivery of Title II-supported food security programs. PIA emphasizes activities that will produce evidence-based results, provide recommendations to support others in adopting innovative practices, strengthen existing practices, or improve organizational technical capacity.

At the end of Year 2, TOPS had submitted the five PIA applications received that year to USAID for approval. USAID approved all five in Q1 of Year 3. The five awards, implemented during Year 3, address M&E, ANRM, nutrition and

SBC knowledge gaps. **Attachment 3** summarizes the PIAs issued in Year 3, with a total obligation of $496,173. A brief description of each award is also provided in **Table 4**.

Table 4
PIAs Implemented in Year 3

Title	Implementing Organization	Description
Information System for Management, Analysis, and Reporting Timeliness: I-SMART	ACDI/VOCA	Develop and pilot a cost-effective electronic beneficiary registration and tracking system to improve the accuracy of reporting and allow for analyses to determine impact associated with different interventions
Diet Quality Survey	CRS	Through pilot testing and analysis, improve a survey-based assessment tool that is adapted from the Household Dietary Diversity Score and is used to assess beneficiaries' diet quality, identify nutritional gaps, and provide programming recommendations for addressing these gaps
Integration of the Care Group MCHN BCC Model with the Grass Roots Building our Wealth (GROW) Social and Economic Development Model: Synergies in Food and Nutrition Security Programming	Project Concern International	Evaluate the effectiveness of integrating Care Group and GROW methodologies on health and nutrition behaviors through a quasi-experimental (case/control) study design; identify lessons learned and assess of their implications for taking this pilot experience to scale and improving future food aid programming; document and disseminate the results of the study
Regional Agricultural Marketing Production of Super Gari	OICI International, with World Initiative for Soy in Human Health Program	Promote the production and consumption of the fortified food product Super Gari, produced in Liberia, to improve nutrition and enhance local economic development as it becomes more widely used and commercially available
Market Analysis and Response Kit (MARKit)	CARE with CRS	Develop the *Market Analysis and Response Kit* (MARKit) to empower development food assistance organizations to design, monitor, and evaluate programs that are responsive to local market conditions; pilot by LRP Learning Alliance members around the world, then disseminate to the wider food security community

In June of 2013, the second PIA RFA was released, and TOPS received eight concept papers. Of those, five were selected for full proposal application. TOPS deemed that two of those five proposals were technically feasible, and sent the strongest proposal to USAID for approval. USAID declined the project, however, and no additional PIA were issued in Year 3. TOPS looks forward to more applications throughout Year 4. As with Micro Grants, TOPS will promote PIAs through several channels to encourage a steadier application flow throughout the year.

The relationship between the TOPS FSN Network Task Forces and the Small Grants Program has continued to grow. TOPS has championed a community-driven process to identify knowledge gaps. The TOPS mid-term evaluation identified several ways to improve the quality of applications and to streamline the approval processes. In Q4 of Year 3, in response to these recommendations, Task Forces identified topics of interest and need. In Year 4, TOPS will publicize these topics through the FSN Network and will encourage—in fact, challenge—implementing organizations to submit proposals to address these topics. TOPS intends to solicit more of these 'challenge' RFAs to stimulate greater activity within the Small Grants Program, in recognition that this is an area for program improvement.

While the number of awards issued in any year depends on TOPS receiving strong, technically sound proposals, TOPS expected in Year 3 to have received a greater number of proposals, due to the revised PIA submission schedule and the increased ceiling for the Micro Grants. Indeed more applications were received, but the total

funds obligated was lower than expected: TOPS obligated $ 526,098 by the end of Year 3, against a planned $ 1.8 million.

The TOPS team discussed bottlenecks in the review and approval system with Save the Children and USAID to identify opportunities to streamline the process. TOPS was able to convince Save the Children to modify the internal approval system to authorize small grants without delay, based on a pre-approved template. In Q4 of Year 3, USAID identified an individual to assist with expediting the Small Grants review process. With review and approval improvements now in place, with wider public awareness of the program, and with the initiation of the 'challenge' grants concept, TOPS expects a significant increase in activity in the Small Grants Program in Year 4.

PR3: Knowledge Application. Effective and appropriate traditional and non-traditional skill delivery approaches and systems/applications used.

IPR 3.1: Capacity of food security practitioners strengthened through focused skill transfer.

Throughout Year 3, TOPS continued to devote resources to traditional approaches for capacity building, notably sector-specific technical training workshops (**Table 5**). In all, more than 300 practitioners on three continents participated in TOPS trainings.

Increasingly, the content of these trainings is takes cues from the core competencies defined by the relevant specialty Task Force. For all trainings, TOPS administers deploy pre- and post-tests—linked to core competencies--to guide training content, evaluate training quality, and help participants' gauge their own progress.

Table 5
Year 3 Sector-Specific Technical Training Workshops

Dates	Topics	Location	Country / Specialty of Attendees	Number of Participants
ANRM				
Aug 26-30 2013	Part 1: DCM; Part 2: Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM)	Addis Ababa	Ethiopia and South Sudan. Staff of: PVOs managing Title II projects and other food security programs, Haramaya University, USAID, and the Government of Ethiopia.	DCM – 24 PRM – 25
CM				
Jan 21 – 25 2013	Food Assistance Commodity Management (FACM) Workshop curriculum covering the entire supply chain	Guatemala City	Latin America and Caribbean: Guatemala (18), Haiti (1)	19
Feb. 18-22 2013	FACM Workshop Curriculum	Niamey	W. Africa; Niger (26), Mali (1); Senegal (1), Burkina Faso (1)	29
April 8-10 2013	3-day condensed FACM Workshop Curriculum	Kampala	E. Africa (2), Uganda (16), DRC (2), Burundi (1), South Sudan (1)	22
M&E				
Mar 4-9 2013	M&E: Quantitative data analysis with commonly used statistical software packages	Niamey	Francophone Africa: Burkina Faso, Chad, DRC, Mali and Niger	30
Nutrition & Food Technology				

Dates	Topics	Location	Country / Specialty of Attendees	Number of Participants
Jun 18-24 2013	Training of Trainers in use of modified portions of the Trials of Improved Practices methodology for formative research (a) as a behavior change activity, and (b) to build staff skills in listening, dialogue and negotiation: *TIPs for TOPS*	Blantyre	Health and Nutrition Coordinators from CRS, as lead, and the seven partners of the Malawi FFP-funded WALA Project consortium, one representative from the Madagascar FFP-funded SALOHI Project consortium, and one from the USAID Malawi-funded Strengthening Services Delivery Integration project.	14
Joint SBC and Nutrition				
July 15-19,2013	Three sessions: (1) Care Groups, (2) IYCF practices, and (3) integrating agriculture and nutrition.	Monrovia	Health and Nutrition Coordinators, Food Security Program Managers, and SBC staff from DRC, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Also, one project staff from Ethiopia and two nutritionists from Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.	18
SBC				
Sep 29-Oct 4 2012	Designing for Behavior Change (DBC) Training	Dhaka	Health and Nutrition, Agriculture, Program Managers, SBC, Communication staff from Bangladesh	26
Aug 12-17 2013	DBC Training	Copan (Guatemala)	Specialists in health, nutrition, agriculture, SBC and gender; also Project Managers and Communications staff	27

Agriculture and Natural Resources

The TOPS ANRM team delivered DCM and PRM trainings in Ethiopia, with assistance from a Food and Agricultural Organization training specialist, in response to topics of interest identified locally. Experts from USAID and implementing organizations in Ethiopia presented their practical experience in short sessions to ground technical components in the local context. Ninety six percent of DCM participants and 100 percent of PRM participants rated the training as good or excellent; both events scored of 4.35 out of 5 in overall usefulness and clarity.

Trainings were planned for Uganda, Liberia and Guatemala, but significant delays in discussions with USAID meant it was not possible to secure dates during Year 3. The Uganda training, featuring SBC and agriculture, post-harvest technologies, DCM and value chain finance, was confirmed for Q1 of Year 4. The ANRM team will secure events in Liberia, Guatemala and additional countries in Year 4. Also in Year 3, a training was planned to coincide with the Bangladesh FSN Network Knowledge Sharing meeting; both were cancelled due to political unrest.

While development of the ANRM module of the self-assessment toolkit was underway, the team developed a *training information form* in Q2 of Year 3. The form, like the self-assessment module, was based on the ANRM core competency list, and allowed respondents to identify the competency areas in which they (or their staff) needed training. All Chiefs of Party (COP) of current Title II projects received the form; 70 percent completed and returned it. Response data were used to: develop training course content in Year 3, identify regional similarities and differences, and provide initial content information for FSN Network Knowledge Sharing meetings. The team will continue to use these data to inform training programs in Years 4 and 5, along with self-assessment data and information gleaned from discussions with COPs.

Commodity Management

With the start-up of the TOPS CM training component in Year 3, the CM Technical Team launched a rapid-fire series of trainings to coincide with and support the start-up of new Title II food assistance programs. The CM team, with USAID's FFP and multiple PVO partners, hosted three FACM workshops in the first half of 2013, one each in Guatemala, Niger and Uganda. The workshops were designed to further participants' comprehensive understanding of critical aspects of the commodity supply chain.

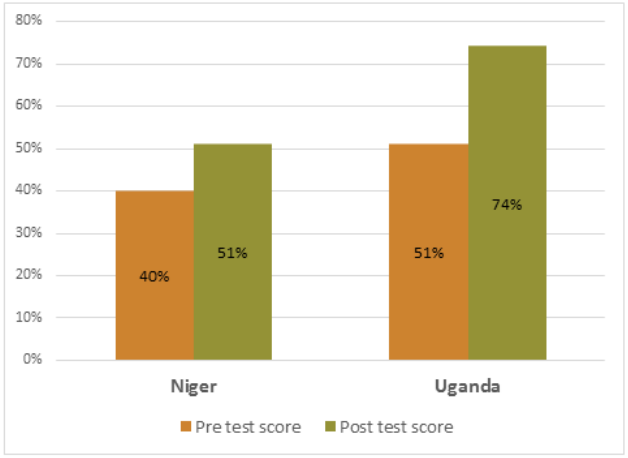
The FACM workshops relied on a core team of CM and supply chain specialists from TOPS/Save the Children as trainers, supplemented by presentations from multiple FFP officers and consortium staff. Seventy individuals from 11 organizations participated in the three workshops. Most were from the countries in which the workshops were held, but TOPS opened enrollment to neighboring countries with particularly pressing training gaps. This attracted participants from Burundi, Burkina Faso, DRC, Haiti, Mali, Senegal and South Sudan. Workshop participants came from a wide range of implementing partners, both Title II prime awardees and their sub-awardees.[7]

Participants completed training needs assessments prior to attending, and TOPS CM specialists reviewed these and the findings of the Regional Inspector General audit reports to tailor workshop content. In addition, the knowledge and experience of TOPS and FFP CM specialists helped to identify and prioritize a list of areas in which participants' skills needed to be strengthened. Along with country specific topics, 18 crucial skills were discussed at the workshops:

1. Supply Chain Management
2. US Processes: Ordering Commodities
3. Regulation 11
4. Internal Controls
5. Commodity Quality Issues
6. Transportation of Commodities
7. Fumigation and Disposal (Environment)
8. Warehousing
9. Beneficiary selection
10. Distribution
11. Handling and Mitigating Losses
12. Monitoring
13. Branding and Marking
14. Reporting
15. Commodity Reporting
16. Regional Inspector General Audit Findings
17. Gender in Commodity Management
18. Fraud Prevention

A significant challenge in these workshops was the clear lack of capacity and experience among participants. The ideal candidate for the FACM workshop is someone with 2 to 8 years of CM experience, with a good understanding of CM concepts, who can engage with the more advanced content and interactive design of the workshop. What the training team encountered, however, were a high proportion of new staff, some with no experience at all. **Figure 6** shows average test results of all participants—those with some and those with no previous CM experience—at two of the three FACM workshops held in Year 3. In each case, scores increased substantially from pre- to post-test, although scores remained lower than desired, especially in Niger, for reasons described above. The CM team subsequently modified participation criteria, refined the curriculum, and incorporated several additional adult learning techniques into the FACM workshop design. In spite of the challenges discussed here, post-workshop satisfaction surveys showed impressive results: the FACM workshop in Guatemala scored 91 points on a weighted 100-point scale. Niger scored 89 points, and Uganda 87 points. A combined 99 percent of participants agreed they would recommend the workshop to a colleague.

Figure 6: FACM Workshop Average Pre- and Post-Test Scores



The TOPS CM team also provided individualized technical assistance in two instances upon request:

1. Orientation on Regulation 11 and USAID reporting requirements to nine management staff of CNFA, a new implementing partner for FFP in Zimbabwe, and
2. CM support, during a one-week visit, to program and CM staff of FFP implementing partners OIC International and ACDI/VOCA in Liberia.

[7] ACDI/VOCA, ADIPO, Africare, Caritas, Counterpart International, CRS, Mercy Corps, Project Concern International, Save the Children, WVI and USAID/FFP missions and regional offices.

Gender

No gender workshops were held in Year 3, but the Gender Technical Specialist supported TOPS CM staff on the design and delivery of sessions on gender and food security integration for the Guatemala and Niger FACM workshops.

Monitoring and Evaluation

TOPS planned to conduct two trainings on data analysis in Year 3, one each for Francophone and Anglophone Africa. Due to staff changes, however, only the former took place. The six-day training on quantitative data analysis in Niamey, Niger, attracted 30 M&E practitioners from several organizations.[8] The primary objectives were to equip participants with software-specific skills to create a data entry application, and to analyze data. Topics included: creating a data entry application, creating data entry logic, data entry and export, data management, introduction to data analysis, understanding variables, measures of central tendency, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics.

Nutrition and Food Technology

As part of the TOPS program, Food for the Hungry sponsored a five-day workshop in Liberia on the use of Care Groups in food security projects (see also SBC, below), with a sub-focus on IYCF practices. TOPS' Technical Specialist for Nutrition and Food Technology facilitated sessions on nutrition. Specifically, attendees learned about the 1,000 days initiative; progress made globally and regionally in the reduction of stunting (and the consequences and timing of growth faltering); an overview of the seven Essential Nutrition Actions; and a detailed review of ENA practices for maternal nutrition, optimal breastfeeding and optimal complementary feeding. A well-appreciated, participatory training activity covered preparation of porridge in the appropriate density and quantity for three age groups (6-8 months, 9-11 months, and 12-23 months). The last day of the training was dedicated to participatory discussion of how and why to integrate agriculture and nutrition activities.

Social and Behavior Change

Food for the Hungry's Liberia workshop (above) helped participants learn to use Care Groups in food security project settings. The aim was not only to increase the knowledge and skills of participants, but to pilot-test the draft curriculum *Care Groups: A Training Manual for Program Design and Implementation.* Lessons and feedback from the workshop will be used to finalize the manual.

> *Los procesos metodológicos me apasionan (I am passionate about these methodologies*).
>
> *Aprender como utilizar la metodología para mejorar una intervención* (*the most useful thing for me…was learning how to use the method to improve an intervention*).
>
> Participant Remarks
> DBC, Guatemala

Prior to the workshop in Liberia, Food for the Hungry sponsored a workshop in Virginia on designing and implementing Care Group projects, using the newly revised draft of *Care Groups: A Training Manual for Program Design and Implementation*. Each participant received a copy of the training manual. Several said the manual, and the tools within it, will be very helpful for training and start-up of their Care Group Projects. One expressed how much she wished the training had been available a few years ago, as she would have saved untold difficulty trying to 'pull this stuff out of my hat.'

Many participants at the DBC training in Bangladesh reported, in the post-training survey, that they had specific plans to share their new knowledge within their organization and with partners. Many intend to perform barrier analysis, and use the results to plan program activities. The Guatemala workshop on the same topic, co-hosted by

[8] ACDI-VOCA, CRS, Save the Children, WFP, ADRA, Mercy Corps, Africare, Counterpart International, Helen Keller International, USAID and WVI.

TOPS and Mercy Corps, was held near a Mercy Corps project area, where participants conducted a barrier analysis as part of their training. Workshop interactions were lively and participants often stayed late at night to continue discussions. Most participants made plans to use what they had learned in the near future, and to share information with their teams.

Pre- and Post-Testing

TOPS continues to use pre- and post-testing at each of its training events as a means of: guiding training content, evaluating training quality, and helping participants' gauge their own progress.

PR4: Knowledge Sharing. Information, skill, and knowledge exchange supported and expanded.

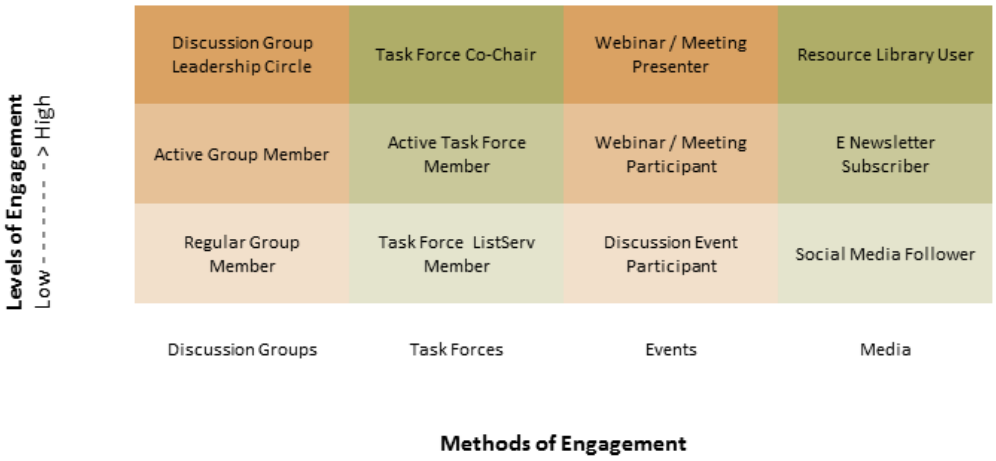
The TOPS FSN Network is the primary mechanism through which TOPS engages with the food security community. TOPS and FSN Network members are able to share best practices, experiences, tools and approaches for better program implementation; USAID, international organizations, and the academic and research communities have a venue in which to reach implementers with new policies, guidance and evidence. The FSN Network also provides FFP the opportunity to seek specific input from the food security community through stakeholder consultations, surveys, and dialogue in Task Forces and knowledge sharing meetings.

The TOPS Program has nurtured and promoted a range of strategies and mechanisms for creating high-quality opportunities for FSN Network members to meaningfully engage with one another and exchange knowledge. These include:

(a) developing strong, two-way communication channels with the implementer, donor, and academic communities to ensure that FSN Network activities are responsive to their needs
(b) strengthening, broadening and diversifying links within and beyond the Title II community to ensure timely and relevant information is shared
(c) creating multiple 'venues' where implementers can engage with the rest of the FSN Network so that active and passive members can benefit, remote participants can be accommodated, and content-specific topics and activities can be developed and promoted in response to expressed stakeholder needs and interests (see **Figure 7** below)
(d) expanding opportunities for meaningful peer-to-peer dialogue and information sharing

In Year 3, the TOPS FSN Network continued to grow and foster opportunities for sharing. The FSN Network Web Portal saw a substantial increase in visits, downloads and online discussions in Year 3, its second year of operation. TOPS migrated several discussion groups to the FSN Network Web Portal and took steps to catalyze participation online. TOPS organized several stakeholder consultations with FSN Network members to garner input from implementers of Title II programs for FPP, and continued collaboration with a variety of partners (including USAID's Bureaus for Food Security and for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance), other globally funded projects (such as FANTA-III, SPRING, K4Health, AgriLinks), and academic institutions (such as Cornell and Tufts Universities). TOPS continued to engage implementing agencies—CRS, CARE, Land O'Lakes and WVI among others—as partners through meaningful engagement in FSN Network Task Forces, the Program Advisory Committee (PAC), FSN Network knowledge sharing meetings, discussion groups and other endeavors. These implementing partners played a strong role in setting agendas, evaluating resources, identifying core competencies, and sharing knowledge and experience to benefit the broader food security community.

Figure 7: Multiple Levels and Methods of Engagement to Suit Diverse Network Membership



IPR 4.1: Physical and virtual community exchange forums and knowledge sharing mechanisms supported and expanded.

The TOPS FSN Network

TOPS launched the FSN Network in February 2011. The TOPS KM Team directed Year 3 efforts toward strengthening the quality, awareness and use of the several mechanisms that were developed in Year 2 to promote information exchange and knowledge sharing. Equally important, the KM Team set its sights on strengthening the sense of community and the level of participation online.

The TOPS FSN Network Task Forces

The range of organizations engaging with the FSN Network Task Forces is extensive, as shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6
Organizations that Actively Contributed to FSN Network Task Forces in Year 3

Type of Organization	Names of Organizations
Implementing Organizations	ACDI/VOCA, ADRA, Africare, CARE, Conservation through Poverty Alleviation International in Madagascar, CNFA, Catholic Relief Services, Concern International, Counterpart International, Curamericas, Food for the Hungry, Helen Keller International, International Medical Corps, International Relief and Development, Land O' Lakes International, Lutheran World Relief, Mercy Corps, Nutrition and Education International, OIC International, Project Concern International, Samaritan's Purse, Save the Children, Winrock International, World Vision U.S., WVI
Globally Funded Projects	FANTA-III, K4Health, SPRING
U.S. Government	USAID Bureau of Food Security, USAID Global Health Bureau, USAID Knowledge-Driven International Development
Academic and	Cornell University, Tufts University, Tulane University, University of California Davis,

Type of Organization	Names of Organizations
Research Institutions	Virginia Tech
Advocacy Organizations	Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa, The Hunger Project
International Organizations	Food and Agriculture Organisation, Pan American Health Organisation, UN High Commission on Refugees, World Food Programme
Other	Ag2nut group, consultants working in food security, Cultural Practice LLC, CORE Group, FHI 360, Global Food and Nutrition Inc, Global Nutrition Cluster, John Snow Inc, QED Group, TANGO International

Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Task Force

The ANRM Task Force provided feedback on the agriculture and environmental section of FFP's comprehensive list of indicators. In addition, TOPS convened a joint meeting of its ANRM and M&E Task Forces, with special invitation to Feed the Future implementing partners, to discuss challenges with the ANRM indicators. This was part of the USAID Bureau for Food Security-funded FEEDBACK project aimed at developing a Feed the Future agricultural indicators guide, and contributed to refining the scope of work to identify areas the guide should address. The task was particularly relevant to FFP implementers, given the USAID strategy to align M&E indicators across the agency.

The ANRM and Nutrition and Food Technology Task Forces met in Q2 (with invited members of the Gender and SBC Task Forces) to review a draft outline developed by TOPS as a potential tool: '*Framing the discussion of the integration of agriculture and nutrition for project design and implementation.*' In small groups and plenary, participants shared their experiences with practical strategies in linking agriculture and nutrition, and provided suggestions for tool content.

During Q4, the ANRM Task Force provided feedback on the draft MARKit toolkit, which CARE (with CRS) is developing with a PIA from the TOPS Small Grants Program. MARKit will help managers create a market monitoring system for cash, voucher, local purchase and traditional food assistance programs to (a) improve food security outcomes and (b) ensure that the concept of 'Do No Harm' is part of activity design.

Commodity Management Task Force

The CM Task Force began its work in earnest during Year 3. It held three meetings (November 2012, February and May 2013), in which members agreed on the Task Force's goal and objectives, and chose to begin work on the core competencies for Commodity Manager and their inclusion in a self-assessment module for the future *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*. Several smaller working groups were formed to review or contribute to the creation of tools such as the *Commodity Management Handbook*. A few members of the Task Force also served as resource persons in the CM capacity building workshops in Year 3.

Gender Task Force

In years past, the Gender Task Force meetings drew a diverse attendance (ranging from interns to project managers) from diverse organizations (including multilateral organizations and NGOs). In Year 3, TOPS attempted to narrow attendance to implementing partners to better identify areas of interest and focus on specific activities to improve gender integration in development food assistance programs.

Gender integration is cross-cutting, and efforts have therefore been made to engage more with the other TOPS technical and cross-cutting areas. For example, a gender and nutrition

The FSN Network Gender Listserv *has diverse membership including NGOs (local and international), U.S. government agencies, members of the academic community, and research institutions. A weekly email is sent to listserv members with resources, event information, and job vacancies to keep them engaged in gender issues and opportunities related to food security.*

presentation was given during one of the Gender Task Force meetings, and the TOPS Gender Technical Specialist engaged in ANRM and CM meetings Task Force meetings.

Knowledge Management Task Force

In Year 3, the KM Task Force built on the momentum that is growing in and around USAID on *program learning.* As it began to draft a framework to guide its activities, the KM Task Force chose to focus on program learning in four key areas:

1. Understanding local context
2. Assessment and research/inquiry
3. Response mechanisms/course correction
4. Documentation and sharing

The KM Task Force also provided input to the Tufts Food Aid Quality Review, including a KM perspective on the uses of Title II reporting data, advice on improving the interface and taxonomy in the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse, and recommendation that FFP place greater emphasis on program learning. KM Task Force members also participated in the 'Share Fair' organized by the Global Health Knowledge Collaborative.[9]

In Year 3, the KM Technical Specialist and the KM Task Force developed consensus language for FFP to include in the FY13 *RFA for Development Food Assistance Programs* to promote an enabling environment among PVOs and donor support for knowledge sharing. The departure from TOPS of the KM Technical Specialist meant a temporary halt to Task Force activities and achievements in the second half of Year 3.

Monitoring & Evaluation Task Force

The M&E Task Force continued to hold meetings for PVO headquarters staff (with remote participation) followed by a repeat of each meeting's topic at a time more convenient for field-based M&E practitioners.

Among the M&E Task Force's notable achievements in Year 3 was provision of input to multiple reviews of FFP indicators, starting with the comprehensive list of indicators in Q1, followed by joint input with other TOPS Technical Specialists and relevant Task Forces on ANRM indicators, gender indicators, and environmental indicators. TOPS' combination of expertise in M&E and other technical areas made for strong inputs to FFP.

M&E Task Force members were also key participants in the all-day meeting that TOPS organized to provide input to the Tufts Food Aid Quality Review draft recommendations for reporting.

Nutrition and Food Technology Task Force

The Task Force was presented the compiled results from field-testing the nutrition module of the TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit with 30 staff in Southern Africa and Anglophone West Africa. The presentation generated great interest and extensive discussion. Several participants stated they would use the results to inform planning within their organizations.

Also in Year 3, the Task Force held a brainstorming session (face-to-face with remote participation) to gather suggestions for a learning agenda in nutrition that would be investigated, field-tested and documented through the TOPS Small Grants Program. Additional members contributed to the draft learning agenda via the Task Force listserv.

[9] The Global Health Knowledge Collaborative is a community of practice, formed in 2010, to: (a) serve as a platform for members to share ideas, synthesize knowledge, and innovate; (b) collaborate on KM approaches; (c) collect case studies of KM in global health; (d) promote the use of KM products and services; and (e) advocate for the importance of KM. The current chair is Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Communication Programs.

A highlight of Year 3 was the Nutrition Task Force's participation in the first joint meeting with ANRM, Gender and SBC Task Forces, described in the ANRM section above, to discuss the outline for the proposed tool "*Framing the discussion of the integration of agriculture and nutrition for project design and implementation.*"

Social and Behavior Change Task Force

The SBC Task Force developed SBC guidance for FFP that was included in the FY2013 RFA for development food assistance projects in Zimbabwe. The Task Force also developed a list of SBC challenge topics for emphasis through the TOPS Small Grants Program.

A group of volunteers from the SBC Task Force have been collaborating with the CORE Group SBC Working Group to develop the toolkit, '*Make Me a Change Agent!'* Task Force and working group members are arranging to field test, at their own organizations' expense, individual lessons from this draft toolkit. Members of the SBC Task Force and the Care Group Forward Interest Group contributed to the actions underway to create a tool to fill gaps in previous training materials for Care Groups: *Care Groups: A Training Manual for Program Design and Implementation.*

The TOPS FSN Network Web Portal

The FSN Network launched its Web Portal (www.fsnnetwork.org) in Year 2 with four distinct features stressing institutional and individual capacity strengthening (**Figure 9**).

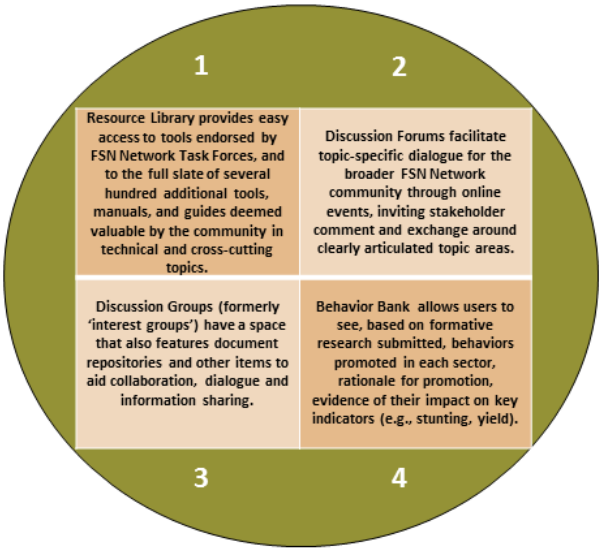


Figure 9: Four features of the web portal

In Year 3, the TOPS KM Team focused on leveraging the Web Portal as a resource for knowledge sharing: drawing more traffic to the Website, growing the resource library, increasing the number of registered users, and ramping up participation in online discussions. TOPS used metrics on the Web Portal, and spoke with Task Force leaders and members of discussion groups, to begin improving the user experience on the Website. TOPS also hired a KM Officer to increase capacity and interaction and build a stronger sense of community among FSN Network members throughout the portal. The Web Portal saw growth in visitors using the resource library and participating in online discussions.

1. Resource Library: In Year 3, TOPS grew the resource library to over 500 tools, guides and manuals spanning 21 topics. The TOPS KM Team linked with stakeholders community-wide to ensure that the latest tools and information products are identified, uploaded, and promoted in *FSN Network News* and on the homepage of the Web Portal under 'Featured Resources.' The KM Team continued to engage with TOPS Task Force leaders to ensure that all endorsed tools are identified as such online: a search mechanism built into the site allows one-click searching for 'FSN Network Recommended Tools'.

2. Discussion Forum: In Year 3, the KM Team worked with TOPS Technical Specialists to plan three online discussions. Two occurred in conjunction with FSN Network Web Events—one on 'Engaging Grandmothers and Men as Influencers' and the other on 'Addressing Depression and Fatalism in Food Security Programs.' The most successful discussion on the portal, however, was a stand-alone that solicited input on agricultural tools for the ANRM Task Force to consider for endorsement. The TOPS KM Team plans to build on the lessons learned from these discussion events and explore opportunities to hold more stand-alone discussions soliciting feedback and input from the field in Year 4.

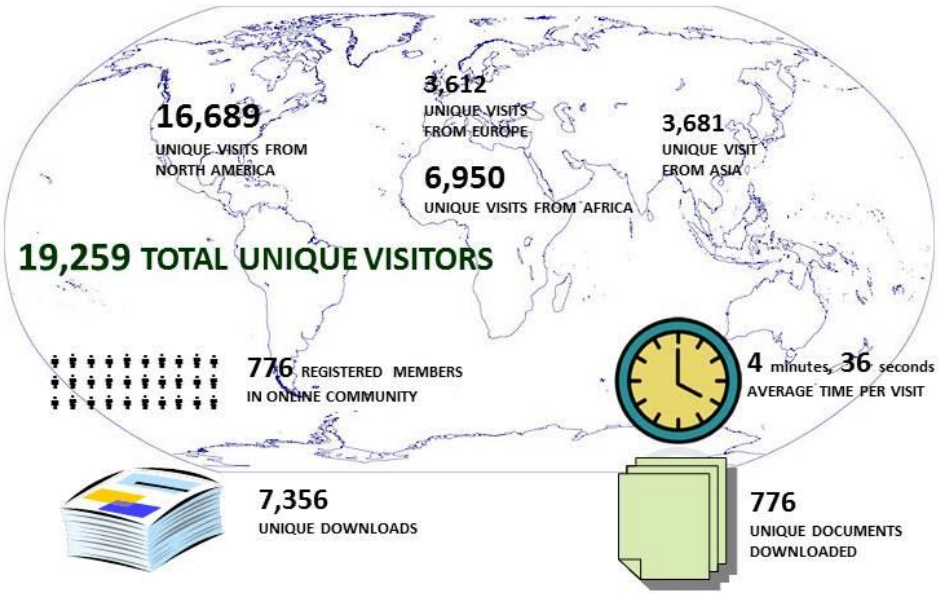
3. Discussion Groups: In Year 3, the TOPS KM Team migrated all interest groups to the portal as discussion groups. As new visitors began registering with the FSN Network Web Portal, they began signing up for the discussion groups in droves. For example, the Nutrition and Agriculture Linkages in Africa Network (NALAN) discussion group, which began with about 30 attendees of the 2012 DBC training in Addis Ababa, grew to over 400 members on the Web Portal by the end of Year 3.

Most newly registered portal members sign up for several discussion groups. The result is a high proportion of members who have claimed interest in a range of cross-cutting topics but who do not actively participate. This poses a challenge for strengthening a sense of community through the portal. The KM team began to consider a traditional forum structure for these cross-cutting discussion groups (momentum picked up with the hire of a KM Officer at the end of Q2) while also working to build cohesiveness in discussion groups by identifying within each a small leadership circle that would help plan and facilitate activities (such as Webinars and other interactive Web events) for those who are interested in going deeper in a topic area. This approach will be rolled out in Year 4. Discussion groups are further treated in IPR 4.2 below.

***4. Behavior Bank*:** Once the portal was launched, the SBC Team began working with Web developers on the Behavior Bank, a database subsite that allows users to see key behaviors promoted in each sector and a table showing the results of Barrier Analyses and Doer/Non-Doer Analyses conducted by food security implementers and others. The subsite was launched in Year 3. Implementers of food security programs are being encouraged (via outreach in the *FSN Network News* and listserv communications) to submit data from Barrier Analyses and Doer/Non-Doer Analyses to this site.

The overall strength and usefulness of the FSN Network Web Portal is reflected in the strong user statistics, summarized in **Figure 10**.

Figure 10: FSN Network Web Portal Activity, Year 3

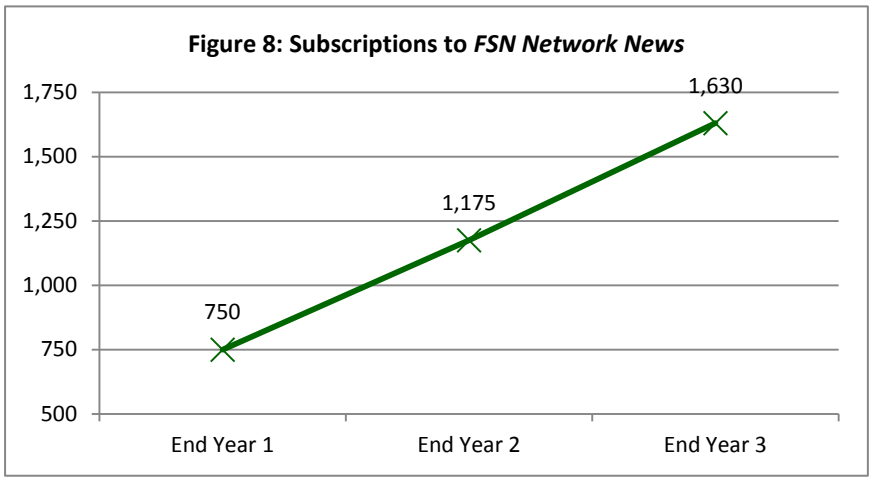


ITEMS MOST FREQUENTLY DOWNLOADED:

● TOPS Microgrant RFA & Application ● About TOPS (one pager) ● TOPS Program Improvement Award Application ● *Introducing Knowledge Sharing Methods and Tools: A facilitator's guide,* by Allison Hewlitt and Lucie Lamoureux ● *Designing for Behavior Change for ANRM, health and nutrition,* by TOPS, FSN Network and CORE Group ● Module 1 and Errata to the *Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition Training: Trainer's guide*, by FANTA ● *Gender Analysis, Assessment and Audit Manual & Toolkit*, by ACDI/VOCA ● *Toolkit: Gender Issues in Monitoring and Evaluation in Agriculture*, by World Bank ● *Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning in Emergencies*, by CRS ● *A Practical Guide for Building a Simple Pit Latrine*, by The Global Water Initiative

The Biweekly FSN Network E-Newsletter

In Year 1, the KM Team launched *FSN Network News*—a biweekly e-newsletter that is the primary mechanism for disseminating information to and between members of the FSN Network. Subscriptions to *FSN Network News* have grown as shown in **Figure 8**. The increase has been fueled by targeted outreach to key implementing agencies, a new wave of e-mail outreach to build awareness of the network among field-based practitioners, and promotion of the newsletter through FSN Network-sponsored Web events.



Members of the FSN Network are encouraged to submit event announcements, resources, job announcements and other news to the KM Team to be featured in the newsletter. The newsletter's center panel contains announcements from USAID and the TOPS Program that are highly relevant to the food security community, notifications of FSN Network-sponsored events and Task Force meetings, job announcements, and a selected resource useful to implementers of Title II. The left panel features a broader selection of events, tools, online discussions, academic articles, policy briefs, and news stories relevant to readers.

In Year 3, the KM Team expanded the center panel of the newsletter by adding a 'From the Online Community' piece that highlights an online discussion from the FSN Network Web Portal. The team also streamlined the 'ways to participate in the network' piece that appears at the top of the newsletter, and implemented new protocol to restrict the length of the e-mail subject line for newsletters. Throughout Year 3, the KM Team collaborated with representatives of Tufts University, FANTA and FFP to advertise information and events relevant to the food security community. The KM Team also began to use the e-newsletter as a vehicle for building awareness about the TOPS Small Grants Program.

Over the course of Year 3, the KM Team e-published 41 issues of *FSN Network News*: 25 regular and 16 special editions. *FSN Network News* has been a useful push mechanism for driving traffic to the Web Portal. In Year 4, the TOPS team will establish a new system for collecting usability data for the newsletter, and use the data to make decisions about how to select and present newsletter content in a way that is most relevant to subscribers and that drives the most traffic to the Web Portal.

TOPS FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Events

TOPS FSN Network knowledge sharing meetings bring together food security grantees, donors, and researchers for peer learning, knowledge sharing, and networking. TOPS has established a model for these meetings that prioritizes community knowledge sharing, with presentations by implementing organizations on the challenges and successes they encounter, and with small group discussions to stimulate cross-organizational collaboration. The meetings' technical sessions fall into three general categories, which help to shape the session format (whether peer-to-peer or 'expert-driven'):

1. Promising practices that merit sharing among organizations and individuals, so that implementation realities and opportunities can be better understood
2. Topics where group problem solving might help identify and address barriers to effective implementation
3. Topics and areas where additional technical guidance would benefit the food security community

The final activity in any knowledge sharing meeting is to identify a global wish list of next steps for the topic at hand. TOPS shares this important input with FFP and other key stakeholders, such as the FANTA-III Project.

Each TOPS Technical Specialist plays a vital role in knowledge sharing meetings, shaping a global learning agenda and ensuring the technical legitimacy and relevancy of the content presented. For topic areas beyond the scope of the TOPS Technical Specialists, the KM Team seeks the engagement of FSN Network champions. Such championship in prior events, in terms of agenda setting and planning specific sessions to meet community needs, has been demonstrated by CRS, Land O'Lakes and WVI, among others.

Fourth Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting: Washington, DC, November 13–15, 2012

The TOPS Program hosted the Fourth FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Meeting, titled *Resilience in Action,* in November 2012. The event convened 154 implementers, researchers and donors from 37 organizations and 11 countries for peer learning, knowledge sharing and networking on *implementation strategies and practices for strengthening resilience and improving food security and nutrition outcomes*. Specific topics were: resilience, community engagement in nutrition, theories of change, promising practices in capacity strengthening of local organizations, agriculture-nutrition linkages, fraud prevention in CM, USAID's Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Framework, matching goals and resources in program-level research, motivating community health workers and more. The meeting materials are available at fsnnetwork.org.

Planning the Fifth Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting: Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, November 2013

At the beginning of Year 3, TOPS set its sights on holding the Fifth Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As always, the conception and planning phase for such a meeting began with in-depth stakeholder surveys and interviews to identify the most pressing needs, challenges and opportunities for knowledge sharing among prospective participants. Those polled gave excellent feedback that was used to design sessions, and the majority wanted the meeting to take place in mid-May of 2013. Unfortunately, growing political unrest in Bangladesh made travel to and within Dhaka dangerous, and TOPS was forced to cancel the May 12-14 meeting.

TOPS regrouped and planned the Fifth Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting to be held in West Africa, with an audience of Title II implementers in Francophone African countries. While the first two international Knowledge Sharing Meetings took place in Africa, neither event catered to the needs of Francophone participants. TOPS therefore opted to design a Knowledge Sharing Meeting with French as the primary language for materials and presentations. This meeting is scheduled for November 18-20, 2013, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. It will be followed by a TOPS Technical Capacity Strengthening Workshop with tracks in ANRM and in nutrition and food technology. The planning and research phase was in full swing by the end of Year 3.

Support for Periodic Knowledge Sharing Events

The TOPS team of specialists, with support from members of the FSN Network, can flexibly respond to stakeholder interests and hold periodic knowledge sharing meetings in Washington, DC, as summarized in **Table 7**. Of note is that many of these events were coordinated with little advance notice, with TOPS staff adjusting planned activities to meet stakeholder needs. The frequency of these periodic events rose during Year 3, and exceeded anticipated targets; TOPS considers this a strong indication of the value that FFP and the food security community is placing on TOPS' position as a knowledge hub for development food assistance programming.

Table 7
FSN Network Stakeholder Meetings in Year 3

Event	Location	Duration	Dates	Attendees	Co-Sponsors
Gender					
Engaging grandmothers and men influencers on IYCF practices	Save the Children, Washington DC and online	2 hours	May 24, 2013	29 participants from 15 organizations	Presentation by Altrena Mukuria, Counterpart International (formerly with Infant Young Child Nutrition Project)
Overview of content of Gender GLEE, the SPRING Project	Save the Children, Washington DC	2 hours	Jun 10, 2013	5 participants from 5 organizations	TOPS presentation of content from SPRING event
M&E					
PVO input to the Food Aid Quality Review recommendations on reporting	Save the Children, Washington DC	6 hours	Oct 16, 2012	29 participants from 16 organizations	Co-facilitated by TOPS and Tufts University Food Aid Quality Review team
Discussion and comment on FFP list of indicators for Development Food Assistance Projects	Save the Children, Washington DC	4 hours	Nov 26, 2012	38 participants from 18 organizations	Co-facilitated by TOPS with input from Bureau of Food Security and FFP
Consultation on environmental indicators	Save the Children, Washington DC	2 hours	Feb 6, 2013	18 participants from 12 organizations	Co-facilitated by TOPS, Sun Mountain consulting and Bureau Environmental Officer, USAID
Consultation on indicators for ANRM activities	Save the Children, Washington DC	4 hours	Mar 13, 2013	31 participants from 15 organizations	Facilitated by TOPS ANRM and M&E Specialists
SBC					
The Cost of Not Treating Depression in Food Security Programs	Webinar	1.5 hours	Jun 25, 2013	23 participants from 16 organizations	Presentation by Helena Verdeli, Columbia University
The HUG Your Baby Approach to Building Parenting and Caregiver Skills	Webinar	1.5 hours	Aug 21, 2013	28 participants from 16 organizations	Co-facilitated by TOPS, HUG Your Baby, Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute at University of North Carolina
Additional Topics					
Environmental Enteropathy and WASH	Webinar	1.5 hours	Sep 11, 2013	100 participants from 31 organizations	Co-facilitated by TOPS, USAID WASH Community of Practice, Cornell University and WASHplus Project
Measuring Resilience for Food Security	Save the Children, Washington DC and online	1 hour	Apr 2, 2013	50 participants from 17 organizations	Facilitated by TANGO International
Building Adaptive Capacity and Resilience of Agricultural-based Livelihoods	Save the Children, Washington DC and online	1 hour	May 15, 2013	27 participants from 19 organizations	Facilitated by TANGO International
FY14 RFA Guidance: FFP Consultation Process	Counterpart International, Crystal City, VA	½ day	Jun 27, 2013	42 participants from 16 organizations	Facilitated by consultant for TOPS

TOPS is also frequently invited to participate in events hosted by other actors in the food security community, as shown in **Table 8**. Participation may take the form of making presentations, contributing to panel discussions, or designing and facilitating topic-specific sessions. As with TOPS' support for periodic knowledge sharing events (**Table 7**), invitations to participate in other entities' events may arrive unexpectedly. TOPS Technical Specialists took pains to respond to as many of these invitations as possible. Again, the growing volume of such invitations indicates that TOPS is achieving a respected position as a hub of knowledge within the food security community.

Table 8
TOPS Contributions to Events Hosted by Others in Year 3

Event	Location	Dates	TOPS Contribution	Attendees to TOPS contribution[10]
CM Technical Specialist				
FACM Workshop	FHI360, Washington DC	December 10-13, 2012	Presentation: *Beyond the Numbers – Interpreting Commodity Management Reports*	30
Gender Technical Specialist				
Annual meeting of the UN Inter Agency Standing Committee Gender Sub-Working Group	United Nations, NY	October 11-12, 2012	Participant in panel on *Gender gaps and successes in 2012 humanitarian response*	20
Save the Children workshop on the integration of family planning and food security	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	December 6, 2012	Presentation on gender and the integration of family planning and food security	15
FACM Workshop	FHI360, Washington DC	December 10-13, 2012	Presentation on Module 6: Gender and Food Assistance	30
USAID gender consultation	Agrilinks.org online	January 30-31, 2013	Online communication of TOPS and FSN Network activities related to gender	n/a
Gender and M&E Technical Specialists				
FFP technical consultation meeting on gender indicators	FHI 360, Washington DC	January 16, 2013	Contribution of inputs from TOPS FSN Network Task Force review of indicators	19
KM, M&E, and Nutrition Technical Specialists				
Presentation of the findings from the Food Aid Food Security Assessment, FANTA-III Project	FHI 360, Washington DC	October 12, 2012	Facilitated PVO discussion of findings on Integration and Sustainability, and findings on M&E	22
Nutrition Technical Specialist				
FFP Global Meeting	Waterview Conference Center, Rosslyn, VA	October 25, 2012	Facilitated overview and discussion of the Essential Nutrition Actions	20
SPRING Nutrition GLEE (N-GLEE) for Africa Region	Kampala, Uganda	December 10-12, 2012	Facilitated training on basic nutrition for agriculture specialists	16
SPRING N-GLEE for Latin America and Caribbean Region	Guatemala City, Guatemala	March 5-7, 2013	Facilitated training on basic nutrition for agriculture specialists	26
SPRING N-GLEE for Latin America and Caribbean Region	Bangkok, Thailand	March 18-20, 2013	Facilitated training on basic nutrition for agriculture specialists	14
Meeting of USAID-funded nutrition project partners, convened by the USAID Global	USAID, Washington DC and online USAID mission staff	April 9, 2013	Presentation on TOPS strategic objectives and nutrition activities	18

[10] Note: attendees at events hosted by others are NOT counted in the TOPS PMP indicators for PR4 Knowledge Sharing.

Health Bureau/HIDN/ Nutrition Unit				
SBC Technical Specialist				
CORE Group Spring Meeting 2013	Baltimore, MD	April 23, 2013	Presentation on Care Group Innovations	45
TOPS Program Management				
USAID/FFP Food Assistance Managers Course	USAID Learning Center, Arlington, VA	August 16, 2013	Presentation on the TOPS Program	30

TOPS' **Nutrition and Food Technology** Technical Specialist provided training in basic nutrition concepts and messages—the sessions were called *Nutrition 101 for Integrated Agriculture*—at the three regional N-GLEE activities hosted by the SPRING Project in 2012-2013. These sessions were among the most highly rated in participant satisfaction surveys, per information provided by the events coordinator.

TOPS Participation in relevant, existing food security-related networks and events

The TOPS Technical Specialists participate in several key food security-related networks. Network activities of particular note in Year 3 included:

- *Food Aid Consultative Group*: TOPS Program Director, TOPS CM team, and the Director of Food Security for TOPS' partner, Mercy Corps, are active participants in this group's activities.
- *United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action*: TOPS Gender Technical Specialist contributed to preparations for and activities during the annual UN meeting.
- *USAID Bureau of Food Security GLEE* supported by the SPRING Project: TOPS' Gender and Nutrition and Food Technology Technical Specialists collaborated to organize and partially co-facilitate four events in Year 3, and continued their collaboration with the SPRING Project that builds from these events.
- *Food Security Information Network Technical Working Group on Measuring Resilience*: The president of TOPS' partner TANGO International is a key expert participating in this group.
- *USAID Global Health Bureau Nutrition Unit Anemia Task Force*: TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Technical Specialist joined this newly formed Task Force in Year 3.
- *Ag2nut group*: TOPS' ANRM team and the Nutrition & Food Technology Technical Specialist participate in this group's monthly phone meetings and share key information throughout the TOPS team, non-TOPS partner staff and other stakeholders within the Task Forces.

IPR 4.2: Local and regional knowledge sharing and networking strengthened.

Foster Field-Level Networking

TOPS strives to be an inclusive, field-driven program. As such, it seeks ways to improve knowledge sharing at the field level and to offer field-level implementers convenient means of participating in the FSN Network. A key strategy has been to strengthen networking capacity of the field for two immediate outcomes:

(1) improved local knowledge sharing on field experience and program learning
(2) stronger linkages between global FSN Network Task Forces and local/regional networks or discussion groups to ensure better information flows on field-level needs and more field-responsive activities at the global level

In Years 1 and 2, TOPS emphasized the formation of regional interest groups that would link implementers on cross-cutting issues. In Year 3, as the interest groups were migrated to the FSN Network Web Portal and rebranded

as discussion groups, the regional focus became increasingly irrelevant: members from around the world registered for discussion group, and discussion topics transcended any particular geographic area. The TOPS KM team focused on strengthening the discussion groups in Year 3 by seeding discussions, getting a better sense of the needs of / topics of interest to discussion group members, taking steps to strengthen leadership in the discussion groups, and laying the foundations for a community of practice approach to building sustainability into discussion groups in Year 4.

Strengthen the TOPS FSN Network Discussion Groups

Not all FSN Network members are ready for the level of engagement that the Task Forces require, but a great number have shown an interest in sharing tools, experiences and technical knowledge around specific technical, cross-cutting, and program management topics that can be applied in their work. TOPS has been fostering the formation of FSN Network discussion groups (formerly known as interest groups) to capitalize on this opportunity.

In Years 1 and 2, several interest groups formed in the wake of TOPS capacity strengthening activities and FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Meetings. Some of these groups were migrated to a listserv, where they remained active. Others lapsed into dormancy. Bearing in mind that fostering a sense of community requires a lot of support, the KM Team decided to let dormant groups lie and focus instead on strengthening those interest groups with committed memberships. These newly branded 'discussion groups,' shown in the table below, were migrated to the FSN Network Website in Year 3.

Table 9
Status of FSN Network Discussion Groups at End of Year 3

Group	Where Formed	Status
DBC	DBC regional training workshop, Silver Spring, MD, March 2012	On FSN Network Web Portal
Reseau Intersectoriel pour le Changement de Comportement en Afrique Francophone (RICCAF)	DBC regional training workshops for Francophone Africa, Niger, September 2011 and Burundi, February 2012	On FSN Network Web Portal
NALAN	DBC regional training workshop, Ethiopia, January 2012	On FSN Network Web Portal
African Monitoring and Evaluation (AME)	M&E training for Anglophone West Africa, Liberia, February 2012	On FSN Network Web Portal
Care Groups Forward	Second Regional Knowledge Sharing Event for Southern Africa, Mozambique, September 2011	On the FSN Network Web Portal.
Program-Level Early Warning (formerly Early Warning Systems group)	Second Regional Knowledge Sharing Event for Southern Africa	Active on e-mail list. Reengaged the community leader in Year 3 to reactivate this group. Will migrate to the portal in Year 4.

In Year 3, TOPS began fostering online discussions on the Web Portal. Momentum picked up with the hire of a KM Officer (at the end of Q2 of Year 3), who has been helping to strengthen leadership and sense of community within the interest groups. The TOPS KM Team also rebranded the 'interest groups' as 'discussion groups' to emphasize the central activities that TOPS is trying to encourage: dialogue and information exchange. Of the five interest groups migrated to the Web Portal in Year 3, members started 43 online discussions and made 162 individual contributions to those discussions.

The most active group in Year 3 was DBC, with 14 active online discussions ranging from how to address alcohol consumption by pregnant and lactating women in Uganda to technical questions on conducting a Barrier Analysis and a Doer/Non-Doer Survey. The second most active group, Care Groups Forward, had nine online discussions,

but also held online meetings, featuring guest speakers, through Blackboard Connect every month or two. The group also continued to work on the *Care Group Implementation Manual*, which will serve as a training resource and toolkit to aid in the design, training, implementation, and monitoring of Care Group programs.

The KM Team also began to revitalize the NALAN discussion group and the Program Level Early Warning discussion group by engaging their leaders, surveying members to better understand their needs, and exploring ways to deepen engagement, such as by fostering a leadership circle to plan regular events and activities for the group in Year 4. If this is successful, it will be used with the AME and RICCAF discussion groups.

Program Management

Overview

During Year 3, TOPS continued conducting the signature activities of its core program, including capacity strengthening workshops and knowledge sharing events, along with facilitating additional mechanisms for participation by the food security community, such as Task Force meetings and special events.

In Year 2, TOPS identified several priorities to address in Year 3. These included launching a series of CM trainings for newly awarded FFP development food assistance projects, conducting a TOPS FSN Network Knowledge Sharing meeting in Asia (Bangladesh), expanding the communications activities of TOPS and the FSN Network, building the Small Grants Program, strengthening the role of the PAC, and increasing partner involvement and contributions to the TOPS Program.

Capacity Strengthening

TOPS continued to assist implementing partners to strengthen their staffs' skills in carrying out food security and nutrition programs. This is an interactive process between TOPS and PVO field staff leadership, and it takes place through direct contact and/or through the FSN Network (e.g., Task Forces). TOPS and the PVO discuss the PVO's perceived gaps, and the TOPS team identifies the technical resources available to fill them. TOPS works with the PVO and FFP (in Washington and relevant country[ies]) to design and schedule a capacity building workshop to address the gaps. (See PR3 Knowledge Application for more on TOPS capacity building activities in Year 3.)

Launching CM training was a Year 3 priority. TOPS conducted CM trainings for PVO awardees of new FFP development food assistance projects in Guatemala, Niger, and Uganda. These three events inaugurated the new TOPS CM training unit and curriculum, which functioned extremely well.

A particular CM challenge was training in Spanish (Guatemala) and French (Niger). Despite initial concerns, simultaneous translation worked well in practice, although it was found that bilingual training took about 25 percent more time to ensure universal comprehension. Curriculum modules were edited and condensed to deliver the most important information. TOPS found that familiarizing interpreters in advance with CM terminology allowed for smooth, uninterrupted interpretation.

Knowledge Sharing Meetings

Bangladesh is FFP's only Title II country in Asia, but the three awards there are the largest FFP awards in the world and are implemented through an extensive number of local partners. TOPS' priority international knowledge sharing meeting for Year 3 was scheduled to be held in Bangladesh in April 2013. TOPS planned this to be a one-country meeting, rather than a regional event as was the case in Year 1 and again in Year 2. Due to escalating civil unrest and random violence in Dhaka in advance of national elections, however, USAID advised TOPS to cancel the

meeting. It was too late in the year to organize a US-based meeting. TOPS therefore decided to prepare for a Francophone knowledge sharing meeting to be hosted in West Africa early in Year 4.

The FSN Network

The FSN Network is the primary TOPS mechanism for interacting with the food security community. During Year 3, the network grew in reach, content, and effectiveness. Early in the year, TOPS hired a networking specialist to strengthen capacity in taking advantage of the established Web Portal and in expanding channels for information sharing (such as hosting online Webinars or guiding discussion groups). The CORE Group, the TOPS partner for KM and networking, hired a new associate to manage the bi-weekly e-newsletter and assist in Website content.

Mid-term Evaluation

The USAID/FFP-mandated mid-term evaluation of TOPS took place in Year 3. The evaluation team was led by Dr. Kent Glenzer, Associate Professor at the Monterey Institute for International Studies. He and evaluation team members conducted the evaluation in July and August, 2013, interviewing a wide selection of TOPS participants and stakeholders. The evaluation reported positive observations concerning TOPS accomplishments in widening and deepening the interactions and exchange of information, knowledge, and tools among food security and nutrition program practitioners.

The mid-term evaluation included several recommendations for bolstering certain elements of the TOPS program. For example, TOPS should strengthen the Small Grants Program, increase the strategic role and participation of the PAC, and collect more information on the uptake of knowledge and skills in TOPS-sponsored training and learning events. These recommendations were taken into consideration when developing the Year 4 Work Plan.

Facilitating PVO Consultation and Providing Technical Assistance

Year 3 saw a significant increase in requests from USAID/FFP for TOPS' assistance in consulting with the PVO community, providing technical assistance for development programs, and preparing for learning events. Key activities in Year 3 include TOPS assistance in conducting a PVO consultation on reviewing and revising guidance for the RFAs for development food assistance projects, provision of targeted technical assistance to implementing partners in Liberia, and assistance in preparations for upcoming FFP-sponsored events in Ethiopia and Niger.

Small Grants Program

The TOPS Small Grants Program is still struggling to stimulate fundable proposals. In Years 1 and 2, forward motion was hampered by ponderous, slow review and approval processes by TOPS, USAID, and Save the Children (which, as Prime on the TOPS grant, is the issuing subgrantor for the approved grants). To accelerate the flow of funds and increase the production of proposals by implementing PVOs, TOPS sought and gained USAID's approval to increase the ceiling for Micro Grants (primarily for training and documentation projects) from $20,000 to $50,000. TOPS also revised the RFA for the PIA (maximum, $100,000) to accept proposals several times a year.

TOPS greatly streamlined the TOPS, USAID, and Save the Children review processes. Now, the time between receipt of a Micro Grant proposal and award of the grant can take as little as a month. The larger PIA awards, which require a more detailed proposal, can take up to two months, if complicating issues are not raised in the review.

During Year 3, TOPS reviewed 17 Micro Grant applications, most of which were submitted during the final quarters. One application was forwarded to FFP for approval and was awarded in Q4. Two more Micro Grant proposals were forwarded to FFP for approval at the end of the year, and TOPS expects to forward an additional eight applications for potential approval in Q1 of Year 4.

TOPS received eight PIA concept notes during the year. Five submitting organizations were invited to develop a full proposal, but all five were rejected or cancelled for reasons such as poor design or inappropriate budget.

The TOPS Small Grant Program needs improvements if it is to achieve its potential for providing small innovation grants to implementing partners and for generating new knowledge and tools. TOPS is weighing ways to directly guide or link applicants, especially smaller ones, to technical assistance for better activity targeting, budget preparation, and wider partner participation.

The mid-term evaluation strongly recommended that TOPS strengthen the Small Grants Program, and provided several suggestions for improvement. TOPS has set this as a priority for Year 4.

Communications, Documentation, and Publications

The TOPS Year 2 report noted that demand for TOPS publications on technical topics was increasing, and that a priority for Year 3 was to produce and disseminate more publications. TOPS has developed a style guide and other communications materials to harmonize the production of materials by consortium partners, Task Forces and other collaborators.

Increased partner involvement

TOPS encourages the five consortium partners to contribute from their store of experience and institutional knowledge to the overall knowledge base in development food assistance programming, typically via one-on-one conversations with partners, including asking Technical Specialists on the TOPS team to reach into their organizations to support TOPS technical training and knowledge sharing. For example, TOPS brought experienced CM staff from several PVOs to serve as expert presenters in TOPS CM training events.

Similarly, the five primary consortium partners and other participating partners have all reached into their knowledge bases to provide information and experience in ANRM (Mercy Corps), resilience definition and measurement methodologies (TANGO International), learning event design and facilitation (the CORE Group), and gender (Land O'Lakes). Partners have also contributed non-TOPS staff time and resources to tools that are being created or modified to fill gaps. These include: Mercy Corps' Livestock Advisor, Food for the Hungry staff with SBC skills, Save the Children's Emergency Nutrition Unit, Save the Children's CM specialists, and TANGO International staff with M&E experience. Partners' in-country offices have provided significant support in organizing country-level or regional technical capacity building workshops. The CORE Group makes use of communication channels beyond the FSN Network to disseminate TOPS' information widely.

PVO partners have provided broad support in preparation for the upcoming TOPS large Knowledge Sharing meeting planned for Q1 in Year 4 (for Francophone Africa in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso). This is an on-going process and TOPS will continue to encourage PVO partners to contribute to TOPS activities.

Program Advisory Committee

The PAC is composed of senior representatives of the five TOPS consortium partners and senior food security managers from the larger PVO community. The PAC has been a 'brain trust' to provide advice and guidance for TOPS activities. The mid-term evaluation in Year 3 identified the PAC as a major resource, and recommended that TOPS establish a stronger, more active and strategic role for the group. To this end, TOPS will hold a one-day strategic planning meeting with the PAC early in Year 4 to craft a stronger scope of work for this body.

Staffing and Internal Management

During Year 3, two TOPS Technical Specialists (M&E and KM) left to join USAID. TOPS recruited and received approval of a new M&E Technical Specialist in Q4; the candidate recruited for the KM Technical Specialist position

awaited USAID concurrence at the end of Year 3. Due to increased commitment to gender in development and the cross-cutting nature of gender in all technical programming, TOPS added a full-time Gender Technical Specialist.

After a long search, TOPS recruited and appointed a Communications Specialist early in Year 3 but mutually agreed to cancel the appointment after three months. TOPS has found it difficult to find appropriately skilled and experienced candidates to fill this position. The TOPS strategy is now to recruit a slightly less experienced communications person who is sufficiently skilled to perform a significant portion of the expected tasks, and then to build that person's capacity, through on-the-job training and internal/external educational opportunities, in those areas where TOPS needs a higher level of skills. TOPS will meet other specialized communications needs through the use of consultants, as needed.

In Year 3 TOPS recruited and placed a CM Operations Manager for the CM training program, and Mercy Corps recruited a TOPS Agriculture Officer to provide additional support to the ANRM Technical Specialist. The Core Group recruited a KM Officer to boost networking and the FSN Network, Web Portal and newsletter, and to promote and conduct online learning such as Webinars.

D. TOPS YEAR 3 CHALLENGES

Facilitating PVO Consultation and Providing Technical Assistance

A significant—and growing—management challenge for TOPS in Year 3 was responding to increased requests for assistance from the donor, other USAID-funded projects, and FFP implementing partners. The upswing in requests is a result of greater awareness of TOPS within the food security community, and of what TOPS can do to help USAID and implementers improve programming. Development food assistance project implementers specifically sought TOPS technical training, and FFP increasingly turned to TOPS to facilitate single-topic, knowledge sharing events to gather input from the PVO community (see Table 7) or to contribute to events hosted by others (Table 8).

This is an important advance for TOPS, but the requests were typically on short notice, and were not anticipated in the TOPS budget. In each instance, TOPS was challenged to adjust the schedules of the relevant technical team members, to find additional technical expertise for the task, and to meet the unplanned costs to be incurred (particularly in preparing for requests for activities planned for early in Year 4). TOPS adjusted its core budget to cover added costs and in one case, obtained an Associate Award from a USAID Mission for help in designing and facilitating a workshop planned for Year 4 (Sahel Resilience awards launch workshop). Another USAID Mission has asked for TOPS assistance in designing and conducting a lessons learned and knowledge sharing workshop with development partners in Year 4.

If this trend—positive as it is—continues, TOPS and FFP must discuss options for covering costs of these unanticipated activities.

Increased partner involvement

Individual members of academic and other resource partner institutions continue to be involved in TOPS and FSN Network activities, but significant involvement of the institutions as a whole is minor. TOPS had hoped to increase participation and collaboration with such institutions during Year 3. At the end of Year 3, arrangements were made for graduate students of the Monterey Institute for International Studies, as part of their coursework during TOPS Year 4, to follow up with participants in TOPS training and knowledge sharing events to determine the extent to which they have absorbed and are applying knowledge and information. (Such follow up was a recommendation of the mid-term evaluation.)

E. TOPS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS

Analysis of the PMP at Mid-term Evaluation

The mid-term evaluation of the TOPS Program was conducted in Q4 of Year 3. The evaluation found, as a key strength of the TOPS program, "the creation of a simple, practical, straightforward, and feasible monitoring and evaluation plan."

The mid-term evaluation also provided a dashboard qualification of the status of the PMP indicators for the TOPS Program (**Attachment 2**) using the color scale shown in **Figure 11**.

Figure 11. TOPS Dashboard Color Scale	
Color	***Interpretation***
Red	Fix This Now
Yellow	A Few Concerns
Green	Everything OK, No Need to Change

Two indicators were classified as RED:

Indicator 4.0: Percent of Small Grants projects (US $100,000 or under) that meet their planned objectives.

By the end of Year 3, only five PIAs for up to $100,000 had been awarded. All five were scheduled to complete activities in Year 4, so this indicator has not yet been relevant. Plans for Year 4 include additional efforts to build awareness of and market the Small Grants Program.

Indicator IR2.4: Knowledge and tools generated through the TOPS small grants and fed into the dissemination channels.

Similar to Indicator 4.0 above, overall the TOPS Small Grants Program was identified by mid-term evaluation as a key area of concern to require additional attention during the remaining life of the program.

Four indicators were classified as YELLOW

Indicator 5.0: Number of organizations served by Micro Grants.

Although TOPS exceeded its target for this indicator in Year 2 (122 versus a target of 15), no additional Micro Grants had been implemented by the time of the mid-term evaluation in Q4 of Year 3. Ten Micro Grants were approved and recommended by TOPS at the end of Q4, and these are expected to be approved by FFP early in Year 4.

Indicator IR1.2.1: Relevant and appropriate tools identified.

The key mid-term evaluation recommendation about tools was to "get more potentially useful tools into the hands of implementers more quickly." TOPS took this recommendation into consideration when preparing its Year 4 Work Plan.

Indicator IR2.3.1: Packaged information on promising practices and approaches generated.

This activity has required a greater level of effort than TOPS Technical Specialists had anticipated when developing the PMP. However, one package was completed in Q4 of Year 3 and will be widely disseminated in Year 4.

Indicator IR4.1.2: Number of regional interest groups actively sharing knowledge on key implementation issues.

With a full KM team on board in Year 4, TOPS will look at a variety of ways of using the multiple communication channels that the TOPS Program has established in order to promote more knowledge sharing at the field level.

Eighteen indicators were classified as GREEN

The remaining 18 indicators were classified as green by the mid-term evaluation dashboard method. A key recommendation from the evaluation was for "more rigorous inquiry into the transfer of training and knowledge sharing to the job," which will be a major performance activity in Year 4.

Additional analysis of Year 3 Achievement versus Targets

In line with the dashboard qualification of the status of PMP indicators, it is noted that ***achievements in Year 3 exceeded Year 3 targets*** for 45 percent of the program's indicators, particularly within PR4: Knowledge Sharing. The number of hits on the FSN Network greatly exceeded expectations (over 32,900 versus 25,000), as did the number of downloads from the Web Portal (more than 7,300 versus 1,500). The Web Portal is proving to be a key mechanism for promoting excellence in food security programming. Meanwhile, the number of rapidly planned single-topic knowledge sharing activities supported in Year 3 greatly exceeded the target (15 versus 5), as did the number of participants reached through these activities (780 versus 250).

PR3: Knowledge Application indicators show that three-quarters of participants in TOPS technical capacity building workshops continue to score higher than 70 percent at post-test, and the average satisfaction score, at 88 percent, is higher than the target of 80 percent. As noted above and per the mid-term evaluation recommendation, in Year 4 TOPS will increase efforts to assess the extent to which participants are transferring skills and knowledge to fieldwork.

Although all targets for ***PR1 and PR2 tools and packaged promising practices*** were not quite met by the end of Year 3, work proceeds well in these areas and the TOPS team expects to meet targets for the life of the program.

F. COMPARISON OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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With three years of implementation, the TOPS Program is fulfilling the overall goal and objectives of assisting implementing partners of FFP-funded food security projects to improve program performance through three of the four primary TOPS strategies, with plans to strengthen the Small Grants Program in Year 4:

1. **A directed program of capacity-building activities** for USAID's development food assistance partners, led by TOPS technical staff.

In each of Years 1 through 3, TOPS has exceeded its annual targets for providing high quality technical training to build the capacity of practitioners in the field, having reached 653 field staff from all regions targeted for FFP programming. After strengthening TOPS' own capacity in assessing practitioner skills and knowledge in Year 1, more than ¾ of participants of TOPS capacity building workshops have consistently performed well on training post-tests in Years 2 and 3, with most of the post-test results showing an average increase ranging from 23 to 31 percentage points above pre-test results. As in Years 1 and 2, participants of TOPS capacity building workshops in Year 3 continue to express a high level of satisfaction with the training provided (87%, 90% and 88%, respectively Years 1-3).

A key recommendation from the mid-term evaluation of the TOPS Program conducted at the end of Year 3 was to pursue a "rigorous inquiry approach to assess knowledge retention, the transfer of training to other project field

staff and partners, and application of new learning to the job." The TOPS Year 4 Work Plan will contain multiple strategies for increased follow-on action and follow-up assessment of the effect of capacity building activities.

2. **An inclusive community of practice** through the FSN Network and technical Task Forces and interest groups, whose membership is open to all USAID grantees and other food security stakeholders.

As in Years 1 and 2, participation in the FSN Network and technical Task Forces and interest groups has continued to exceed expectations. The TOPS team regularly touches base with members of the network and continues to hear anecdotal evidence that the food security community finds the FSN Network activities, the FSN Network bi-weekly newsletter, and the Task Force meetings to be useful. In Year 4, TOPS will pursue follow-up to better document the effect of the community of practice that has been established.

3. **A food security and nutrition Web Portal** (www.fsnnetwork.org), the foundation of the TOPS knowledge sharing system.

With analytics of the FSN Network website showing over 7.4 thousand downloads in Year 3, the Web Portal continues to grow as a key tool for achieving TOPS goals and objectives. With a full KM team in place in Year 4, the TOPS Program plans to further exploit the strengths of the Web Portal structure to further increase its usefulness for the food security community and to maximize Web Portal tools that facilitate participation in dialogue and sharing of best practices through communities of practices.

4. **A small grants program** that promotes the creation, use, and adaptation of capacity-building tools, and encourages evaluation and documentation, to build the evidence base as part of TOPS' work to disseminate best practices to food security and nutrition stakeholders, with a focus on field-led and collaborative initiatives.

PVO partners are aware of the TOPS Small Grants Program and key implementers of FFP-funded food security projects have submitted proposals for a Micro Grant or a PIA or both. However, as noted above, the potential of the TOPS Small Grants Program has not yet been fully exploited. In response to this key finding from the TOPS mid-term evaluation, TOPS will put in place several additional strategies to increase the effective use of this resource in Year 4.

G. COMPARISON OF BUDGET TO EXPENDITURES

As shown in **Attachment 4**, a total of $7,186,727 (or 62 percent) of the Years 1 through 3 budget of $11,580,399 was spent on TOPS program activities between August 13, 2010 and August 31, 2013. Due to the sub-grantees' quarterly reporting cycle, this total does not include sub-grantee expenses that were made in Q4 ending September 30, 2013.

This leaves the TOPS Program with a balance of $4,393,671 at the end of Fiscal Year 3.

Attachment 4 shows that TOPS is underspent mainly in these cost centers: Small Project Grants, Mercy Corps Sub-grant, and Indirect Costs.

Small Project Grants

As of August 31, 2013, a total of $1,782,204 was *underspent* in the category of Small Project Grants.

In Year 3, TOPS posted two types of RFA through which interested applicants could access funds from the Small Grants Program:

- Micro Grants: The RFA was amended in 2013 to increase the ceiling of the Micro Grant to $50,000, with the anticipation that Year 3 would see a greater number of applications with this higher ceiling. Late in the year, the expected rise in applications did occur: TOPS received 17 Micro Grant applications, and recommended 10 for funding. It is expected that FFP will approve these 10 applications, for a total of $520,000, early in Year 4.

- PIAs: Midway through Year 2 (March 2012), the first cycle of PIA RFAs was issued and the TOPS Review and Evaluation Committee selected five applications for consideration. FFP approved the five applications in Year 3; as a result, TOPS obligated $496,026 and expects that this amount will be fully spent in Year 4. TOPS initiated another cycle of the PIA RFA process In Q3 of Year 3, and received five full applications. However, no new PIAs were awarded. Beginning in Q1 of Year 4, the PIA RFA process will be open each quarter and TOPS anticipates a higher volume of applications and, ultimately, awards.

Mercy Corps Sub-grant

In Year 3, Mercy Corps made additional efforts to effectively use funds that had not been spent in Years 1 and 2 due to turnover in key staff positions. At the same time, several program activities planned for Year 3 were pushed back to Year 4. With $583,739 underspent as of August 31, 2013, the budget projected for Year 4 has been accordingly increased.

Indirect Costs

When TOPS initially submitted its budget, an indirect cost rate of 17.04 percent was applied to all direct costs, including sub-agreements, with the exception of equipment greater than $5,000. At present, Save the Children's new indirect costs are calculated at its provisional NICRA rate of 21.72 percent for direct expenses and 5.01 percent for sub-agreements.

Approximately 56 percent (or $11,204,904) of TOPS' overall budget goes to sub-agreements. Therefore, the drastic drop in indirect cost rate, from 17.04 percent (as initially budgeted) to 5.01 percent, has resulted in considerable unspent funds in this category: $935,783).

H. TOPS PRIORITIES FOR YEAR 4

- Carry out mid-term evaluation recommendations.

- Create a strategy and a scope of work for promulgating and institutionalizing knowledge sharing—'knowledge summits'—at the country level among USAID/FFP Missions and implementing partners; pilot at least one.

- Increase TOPS communications penetration in the food security and nutrition community of practice.

- Publish and disseminate *Promising Practices*, the *Warehouse Safety Guide*, the SBC Toolkit ('*Make Me a Change Agent!*'), and other TOPS technical and reference materials.

Activity Description	*2012-2013*												*Current Status*
	Oct	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sep*	
SO.1: *Highest-quality information, knowledge, and best practices for improved methodologies in Title II food aid commodity program performance identified, established, shared and adapted.*													
PR1. KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE: Knowledge and skill needs of audiences identified.													
IPR 1.1: Skill levels of food security practitioners assessed through participatory and external approaches.													
Activity 1.1.a. Finalize pending technical and cross-cutting core competency lists.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**										Drafts completed in Y3, some modifications pending in Y4.
Activity 1.1.b. Draft additional elements of a self -assessment toolkit based on core competencies.			**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**				Drafts in progress.
Activity 1.1.c. Promote field-testing of self- assessment toolkit; gather and analyze results.		**XX**			**XX**	**XX**		**XX**	**XX**			**XX**	3 of 6 planned modules have been field-tested.
Activity 1.1.d. Review and analyze pre- and post-test assessment results from technical trainings.				**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**						On target; ongoing.
IPR 1.2: Relevant and current universe of appropriate tools identified.													
Activity 1.2.a. Review list of tools gathered in Years 1-2 and prioritize for task force review.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Completed on target.
Activity 1.2.b. Through task force review, identify gaps in tools (to feed into PR2 activities).	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
IPR 1.3: Promising practices identified and documented.													
Activity 1.3.a. Review final evaluation reports from development food assistance projects and identify promising practices (output in PR2).	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**								Completed on target.
Activity 1.3.b. Assist development food assistance projects to gather lessons learned.				**XX**	**XX**				**XX**	**XX**			Pending new strategies Y4.
Activity 1.3.c. Establish and maintain a Web-based Behavior Bank of results of Barrier Analysis.				**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing
Activity 1.3.d. Gather information on non-TOPS supported replication of DBC training.				**XX**			**XX**			**XX**			Pending.
Activity 1.3.e. Conduct organizational review of knowledge sharing practices at field level.								**XX**					Review at HQ level complete.

PR 2. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION: Reliable, high-quality information synthesized and produced in user-friendly, appropriate formats.													
Activity Description	***Oct***	***Nov***	***Dec***	***Jan***	***Feb***	***Mar***	***Apr***	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Current Status***
IPR 2.1: User-friendly tools identified, modified or developed, and endorsed by the FSN Network.													
Activity 2.1.a. Review existing tools / modified tools / developed tools in the task forces.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
Activity 2.1.b. Endorse tools following processes established by the task forces.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
IPR 2.2: Tools adapted (created to fill gaps or modified) for use in appropriate formats.													
Activity 2.2.a. Facilitate development of new tools (or modification of existing tools) to fill gaps to increase effectiveness and promote field-testing of tools.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing
IPR 2.3: Packaged information on promising practices shared with food security community for discussion and continuous improvement.													
Activity 2.3.a. Share report on promising practices and continue to identify and add promising practices to the "living document" through additional strategies.						**XX**	**XX**			**XX**	**XX**		Pending Q1 Y4.
Activity 2.3.b. Define essential elements of identified promising practices and approaches.						**XX**	**XX**			**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Pending.
Activity 2.3.c. Package promising practices and approaches in user-friendly formats.						**XX**	**XX**			**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Pending Q1 Y4.
Activity 2.3.d. Package promising practices in knowledge sharing identified through organizational review; share and disseminate.				**XX**								**XX**	Pending Q1 Y4.
IPR 2.4: Knowledge and tools generated and disseminated through the TOPS small grants.													
Activity 2.4.a. Review and approve Small Grants that document existing knowledge or generate new knowledge.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Ongoing but incomplete; increased effort, targeted for Y4.
Activity 2.4.b. Capture documentation to feed into TOPS dissemination channels.			**XX**			**XX**			**XX**			**XX**	Pending.

PR 3. KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION: Effective and appropriate traditional and non-traditional skill delivery approaches and systems/applications used.													
Activity Description	***Oct***	***Nov***	***Dec***	***Jan***	***Feb***	***Mar***	***Apr***	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Current Status***
IPR 3.1: Capacity of food security practitioners strengthened through focused skill transfer.													
Activity 3.1.a. Organize regional and domestic capacity strengthening workshops.				**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**			**XX**	**XX**	Completed on target.
Activity 3.1.b. Organize structured cross-visits (in Year 3, for CM).											**XX**	**XX**	Incomplete ; Pending for Y4.
Activity 3.1.c. Evaluate e-learning opportunities to identify formats appropriate to the FSN community of practice.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Incomplete ; Pending for Y4.

PR 4. KNOWLEDGE SHARING: Information, skill, and knowledge exchange supported and expanded.													
Activity Description	***Oct***	***Nov***	***Dec***	***Jan***	***Feb***	***Mar***	***Apr***	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Current Status***
IPR 4.1: Physical & virtual community exchange forums and knowledge sharing mechanisms supported and expanded.													
Activity 4.1.a. Strengthen outreach for the TOPS FSN Network as a mechanism for stakeholder input and dissemination of network tools, methods, and other outputs.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
Activity 4.1.b. Continue strengthening of TOPS FSN Network Task Forces and global interest groups.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
Activity 4.1.c. Strengthen the TOPS FSN Network Web Portal.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
Activity 4.1.d. Strengthen biweekly e-newsletter with featured community tools, events, and updates.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
Activity 4.1.e. Plan and convene TOPS FSN Network knowledge sharing events.		**XX**					**XX**	**XX**					Completed on target.

Activity Description	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Current Status*
Activity 4.1.f. Provide support to one day knowledge sharing events (in response to stakeholder requests).	**XX**				**XX**			**XX**			**XX**		Targets exceeded.
Activity 4.1.g. Participate in existing relevant networks, communities of practice, and initiatives in food security and priority technical areas (e.g., Feed the Future, FACG).	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
IPR 4.2: Local and regional knowledge sharing and networking strengthened.													
Activity 4.2.a. Foster field-level networking and regional interest groups.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.

Activity Description	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Current Status*
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT													
Launch and conduct CM training and technical assistance.		**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Completed on target.
Strengthen TOPS communications capacity.		**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Ongoing; pending Y4.
Create new or updated informational / outreach tools.		**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX`**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
TOPS mid-term evaluation.									**XX**				Completed on target.
Small Grants Program – revise and expand; review and approve grants.	**XX**		**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Pending response to Mid-Term Evaluation inY4.
Continue regular PMT meetings.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	Completed on target.
Hire new staff – CM Operations Manager, CM Program Associate, and Communications & Documentation Specialist.		**XX**	**XX**										CM completed on target; communications pending Y4.
Expand partner relations; strengthen roles of collaborating and resource partners.			**XX**		**XX**			**XX**			**XX**		Ongoing.
Build communications, learning, collaboration opportunities and liaison with FFP regional offices and country Missions.		**XX**	**XX**		**XX**		**XX**		**XX**		**XX**		Ongoing.

	Activity Description	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Current Status*
	PAC – expand membership, meet for strategic discussions.	**XX**				**XX**				**XX**			**XX**	Mid-term evaluation recommendations targetted for Y4.
	Attend key meetings of other networks to gather information and disseminate information on TOPS Program.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
	Develop Year 4 Annual Work Plan.											**XX**	**XX**	Completed.

PROGRAM M&E SYSTEMS													
Activity Description	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Current Status*
Maintain established monitoring systems.	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	On target; ongoing.
Conduct additional analysis of available TOPS PMP data.				**XX**	**XX**	**XX**				**XX**	**XX**		On target; ongoing.
Continue to survey and contact target beneficiaries to obtain information on sustainable outcomes from TOPS activities.	**XX**			**XX**			**XX**			**XX**			Incomplete; pending Y4.
Coordinate with the mid-term evaluation team for the TOPS Program.								**XX**	**XX**	**XX**			Completed on target.
Report on annual PMP results.											**XX**	**XX**	Completed on target.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
1.0 Number of tools in each phase.	5	28	28	28	28		**32**	**24**			**Annual targets**
Each tool will go through four phases:											A list of tools at each phase can be provided upon request. In Y4, a new position in communications and documentation will be filled and will assist in packaging tools that are modified or created.
a. Identification						n/a	13	7			
b. Modification/creation							8	12			
c. Recommendation/ share							6	4			
d. Adaptation/use							5	1			
2.0 Percent of Title II implementers scoring 70% or higher in post-test assessment on key knowledge, skills, and practices for improved program performance.	60%	60%	70%	80%	80%	56%	87%	75%			**Annual targets** Participant pre- and post-test scores continue to vary based on participant experience and technical topic.
3.0 Percent of FSN Network Task Force recommended tools incorporated into FFP guidelines, information bulletins.	n/a	20%	40%	50%	60%	n/a	64%	50%			**Annual targets** Two of the four tools endorsed in Year 3 were cited in the 2013 RFA guidance.
4.0 Percent of Small Grants projects ($100,000 or under) that meet their planned objectives.	n/a	n/a	80%	80%	80%	n/a	n/a	n/a			**Annual targets** No PIA has been completed as of Year 3. This indicator will be measured in Year 4.
5.0 Number of organizations served by Micro Grants.	n/a	15	45	75	105	n/a	122	n/a			**Annual targets** Multiple Micro Grants were received and reviewed at the end of Year 3; awards are anticipated in Year 4.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR1: KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE: Knowledge and skill needs of audiences identified.											
1a. An effective system is in place for periodic knowledge and skills self-assessment of Title II functional areas by Title II implementing organizations.	n/a	1	1	1	1	n/a	Partially complete	Partially complete			**Cumulative target** M&E, Nutrition and SBC Task Force conducted field testing with draft self-assessment modules.
IPR1.1: Skill levels of food security practitioners assessed through participatory and external approaches.											
1.1.1 Percent of Title II core competency areas defined by the Task Forces.	75%	80%	100%	100%	100%	75%	80%	83%			**Cumulative target** As of Year 3, core competencies were completed for ANRM, CM, M&E, Nutrition & Food Technology, SBC. Core competencies drafted for Gender will be completed in Year 4.
IPR1.2: Relevant and appropriate tools identified.											
1.2.1 Number of tools relevant to food security programs identified.	5	32	59	86	113	5	32	56			**Cumulative target** All tools are first identified before they progress to

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
											other phases. This cumulative figure reflects all tools that TOPS has worked on to date.
IPR1.3: Promising practices identified and documented.											
1.3.1 Number of reports documenting promising practices produced.	n/a	1	1	1	1	n/a	semi-complete d draft	1			**Cumulative target** This document was finalized in Year 3 with promising practices in: nutrition, agriculture and cross-cutting gender and SBC.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR2: KNOWLEDGE GENERATION: Reliable, high-quality information synthesized and produced in user-friendly appropriate formats.											
2a. Average score on user perception survey of appropriateness, efficacy and satisfaction in use of the FSN Task Force recommended tools.	n/a	n/a	70	70	70	n/a	n/a	n/a			**Annual targets** A draft survey was field-tested in Year 2 but was not conducted in Year 3. Feedback from Title II development food assistance programs will be obtained in Years 4 and 5.
IPR 2.1: Existing user-friendly, effective tools identified and endorsed by the FSN Network [Task Forces].											
2.1.1 Number of effective and user friendly ***existing tools endorsed*** by the Task Force members.	5	16	27	38	49	5	12	16			**Cumulative targets** See narrative for list of tools endorsed.
IPR 2.2: Tools adapted (created to fill gaps or modified) for Title II grantee use in user-friendly and appropriate formats.											
2.2.1 Number of existing tools ***modified or new tools created and endorsed***.	n/a	6	12	18	24	n/a	4	16			**Cumulative target** See narrative for list of tools modified or created pending endorsement.
IPR 2.3: Packaged information on promising practices and approaches generated.											
2.3.1 Number of packaged approaches and best practices generated and disseminated.	n/a	3	4	5	5	n/a	0	0			**Cumulative target** See IPR 1.3.1 above; this package of promising practices will be disseminated early in Year 4.
IPR 2.4: Knowledge and tools generated through the TOPS small grants and fed into the dissemination channels.											
2.4.1 Number of tools created, field-tested or validated using Small Grants.	n/a	1	2	3	3	n/a	0	2			**Annual targets** Two tools including I-SMART and MARKit were created and piloted in outgoing year. They will undergo further field testing before being endorsed.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR3: KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION Effective and appropriate traditional and non-traditional skill delivery approaches and systems/applications used.											
3a. Percent of Title II implementers ***aware of at least 50%*** of key FSN Network Task	n/a	50%	60%	70%	75%	n/a	63%	n/a			**Cumulative target** Survey will be conducted in Year 4 and Year 5.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
Force recommended tools.											
3b. Percent of projects ***reporting use*** of the FSN Network Task Force recommended tools.	n/a	40%	50%	60%	70%	n/a	79%	n/a			**Cumulative target** Survey will be conducted in Year 4 and Year 5.
3c. Average score (normalized) on post-training satisfaction survey.	70%	80%	80%	80%	80%	87%	90%	88%			**Annual targets** Surveys show satisfaction with the training methodology, facilitation, content, and relevance to Title II projects.
IPR 3.1: Capacity of food security practitioners strengthened through focused skill transfer.											
3.1.1 Number of regional or global multi-sectoral training events held.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	2			**Cumulative target** Southern Africa Region in Year 1; East Africa Region in Year 2.
3.1.2 Number of staff trained through country level, regional or global training events.	20	232	292	312	192	26	316	311			**Annual targets** Participant interest continues to meet or exceed expectations of the TOPS Program.
3.1.3 Percent of TOPS training events that integrate gender considerations/ principles in content of sessions.	80%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			**Annual targets** Gender is integrated in all TOPS technical capacity building workshops.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR4: KNOWLEDGE SHARING Information, skill and knowledge exchange forums supported and expanded.											
4a.Number of members regularly participating in FSN Network Task Forces.	30	40	40	40	40	70	122	65			**Annual targets** Regular participants are defined as members who attend at least twice annually.
4b. Number of participants attending FSN Network knowledge sharing meetings.	250	250	250	250	250	282	251[1]	780[2]			**Annual targets** The annual knowledge sharing event attracted 180 participants. The increased number of single-topic knowledge sharing events hosted in Year 3 resulted in TOPS greatly exceeding planned targets.
4c. Average score (normalized) on post FSN Network knowledge sharing meeting satisfaction survey.	80	80	80	80	80	74%	80%	87%			**Annual targets** Meetings are well received by the community.
4d. Average number of members participating in FSN Network listservs and discussion groups.	500	850	1000	1200	1200	750	1175	1550			**Annual targets** Community interest continues to exceed expectation of the TOPS Program.
4e. Number of downloads from the FSN Network Website.	n/a	1k	1.5k	1.5k	1.5k	n/a	2.1k	7.4k			**Annual targets** Website launched in April 2012; community interest

[1] This total does not include participants at events that TOPS co-facilitated, such as the IFPRI-sponsored event on resilience in December 2012, nor TOPS collaboration with FANTA-III Project in two events presenting the second Food Aid Food Security Assessment results.

[2] This total does not include participants at events that TOPS co-facilitated, such as FAFSA-2 presentation of findings, FFP Global meeting or the SPRING N-GLEE meetings.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
											continues to exceed expectations.
IPR 4.1: Physical and virtual community exchange forums and knowledge sharing mechanisms supported and expanded.											
4.1.1 Number of FSN Network topic-specific technical meetings held.	2	5	5	5	5	4	4	15			**Annual targets** TOPS sponsored many single topic knowledge sharing events: some were consultative in nature (e.g. meeting to discuss FFP indicators) and others were informative (e.g. building adaptive capacity and resilience of agricultural based livelihoods). A full list appears in PR4 section of report.
4.1.2 Number of FSN Network e-newsletters (or related format) generated that share FSN Network information, products and services.	4	20	20	20	20	7	26	41			**Annual targets** E-newsletter has been consistently produced on a biweekly basis and special issues were released on request as relevant to respond to needs of stakeholders.
4.1.3 Number of hits on FSN Network Website.	n/a	10k	25k	40k	50k	n/a	20.7k	32.9k			**Annual targets** Website launched in April 2012; community awareness and use of site has been growing continuously.
IPR 4.2: Local and regional knowledge sharing and networking strengthened											
4.2.1 Number of regional interest groups actively sharing knowledge on key implementation issues.	n/a	5	6	8	10	n/a	6	5			**Cumulative target** Five interest groups (NALAN, DBC Anglophone, DBC Francophone, Early Warning and AME) are supported via FSN Network Web Portal. One (Care Groups Forward) is supported via an email listserv and periodic online meetings.

Year 3 Micro Grants and Program Improvement Awards

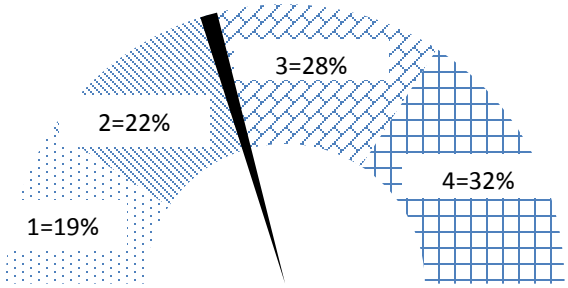
Name and Location of Grant Activity	Implementing Organization	Period of Performance	Description	Grant Amount	Status
Father Solution to Reproductive and Maternal Health Challenges	Project Concern International	Jul 8 2013 to Jun 30 2014	Pilot program on SBC: how linking men to Care Groups increases household and community behavior change in reproductive and maternal health practices.	$29,925.00	Application withdrawn
Information System for Management, Analysis, and Reporting Timeliness: I-SMART	ACDI/VOCA	Feb 1 2013 – Jan 31 204	Develop and pilot a cost-effective electronic beneficiary registration and tracking system to improve the accuracy of reporting and allow for analyses to determine impact associated with different interventions	$99,763.65	Implementation underway
Diet Quality Survey	CRS	Jan 1 2013 – Dec 31 2013	Through pilot testing and analysis, improve a survey-based assessment tool that is adapted from the Household Dietary Diversity Score and is used to assess beneficiaries' diet quality, identify nutritional gaps, and provide programming recommendations for addressing these gaps	$96,425.00	Implementation underway
Integration of the Care Group MCHN BCC Model with the GROW Social and Economic Development Model: Synergies in Food and Nutrition Security Programming	Project Concern International	May 1 2013 – Apr 30, 2014	Evaluate the effectiveness of integrating Care Group and GROW methodologies on health and nutrition behaviors through a quasi-experimental (case/control) study design; identify lessons learned and assess of their implications for taking this pilot experience to scale and improving future food aid programming; document and disseminate the results of the study	$100,000	Implementation underway
Regional Agricultural Marketing Production of Super Gari	OICI International, in collaboration with World Initiative for Soy in Human Health Program	Jan 1 2013 – Dec 31 2013	Promote the production and consumption of the locally produced and fortified food product Super Gari, to improve nutrition and enhance local economic development as it becomes more widely used and commercially available	$100,000	Implementation underway
Market Analysis and Response Kit (MARKit)	CARE in collaboration with CRS	Jan 1 2013 – Dec 31 2013	Develop the *Market Analysis and Response Kit* (MARKit) to empower development food assistance organizations to develop, monitor, and evaluate programs that are responsive to local market conditions; pilot by LRP Learning Alliance members around the world, then disseminate to the wider food security community	$99,984.50	Implementation underway

TOPS Budget versus Expenditures, from August 13, 2010 through August 31, 2013

Line Item	Years 1 to 3 Budget (US$)	Expenditures through 08/31/2013 (US$)	Balance as of 09/01/2013 (US$)
001. Salaries	$1,909,367.00	$1,712,508.93	$196,858.07
002. Fringe and Allowances	$482,952.00	$458,074.65	$24,877.35
003. Travel and Per Diem	$199,365.00	$164,351.93	$35,013.07
004. Equipment	$31,600.00	$23,870.64	$7,729.36
005. Consultants	$168,891.00	$175,390.82	($6,499.82)
006. Supplies/ODC	$120,175.00	$64,073.58	$56,101.42
007. Small Project Grants	$1,849,208.00	$67,003.25	$1,782,204.75
008. Training and Workshops	$711,397.00	$505,225.97	$206,171.03
009. CORE Group	$1,376,496.00	$1,286,133.62	$90,362.38
010. Food for the Hungry	$979,706.00	$627,327.97	$352,378.03
011. Mercy Corps	$1,152,495.00	$568,755.70	$583,739.30
012. TANGO International	$912,742.00	$783,789.08	$128,952.92
Total Direct Costs	**$9,894,394.00**	**$6,436,506.14**	**$3,457,887.86**
Indirect Costs	**$1,686,005.00**	**$750,221.66**	**$935,783.34**
TOTAL	**$11,580,399.00**	**$7,186,727.80**	**$4,393,671.20**

Attachment 5

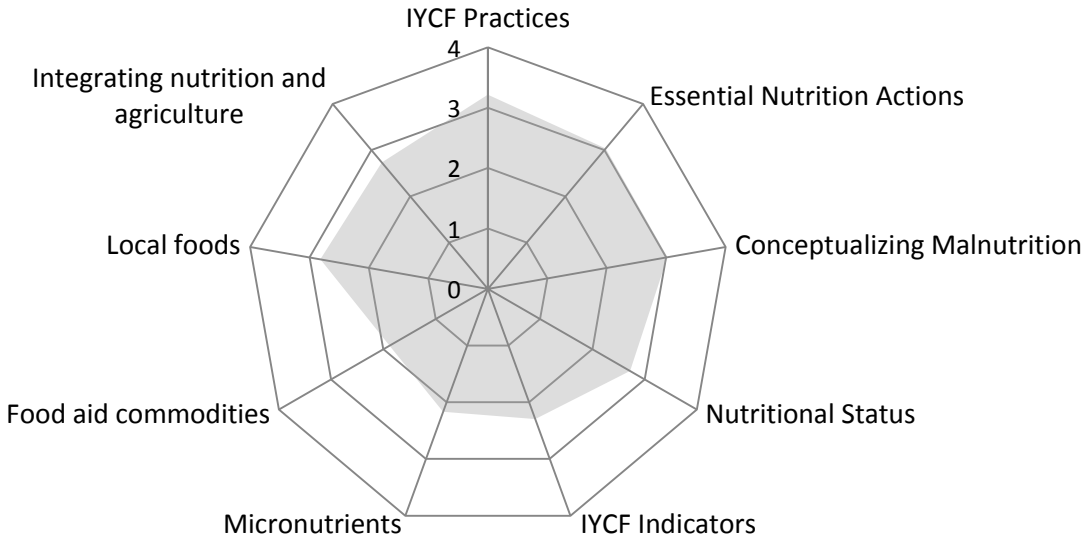
Summary Self-Assessment in Nutrition: Respondents' scores across all core competencies



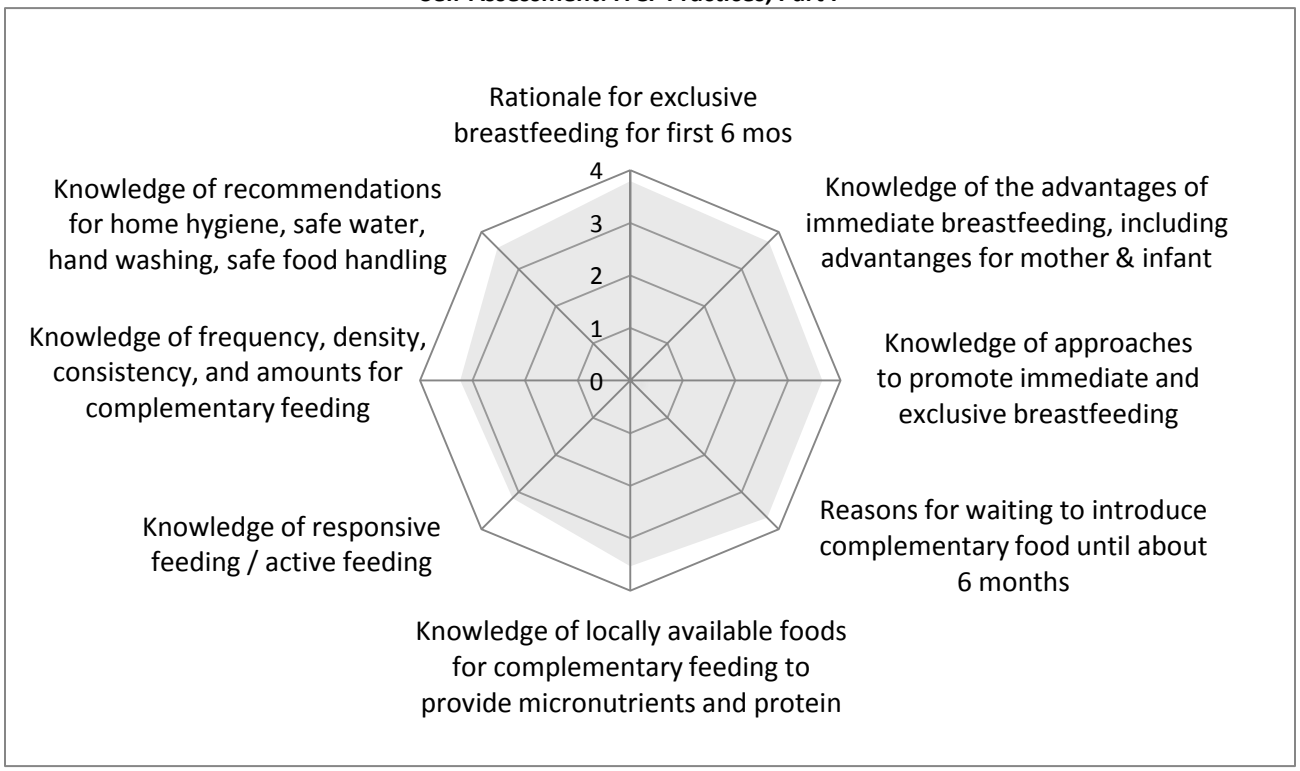
Self-Assesssment Rating Scale

1 = I know nothing about this subject and need to learn more about it
2 = I have moderate knowledge but need more to be able to explain clearly
3 = I feel sufficiently knowledgeable but need more knowledge to train others
4 = I feel sufficiently knowledgeable in the subject and can or have trained others

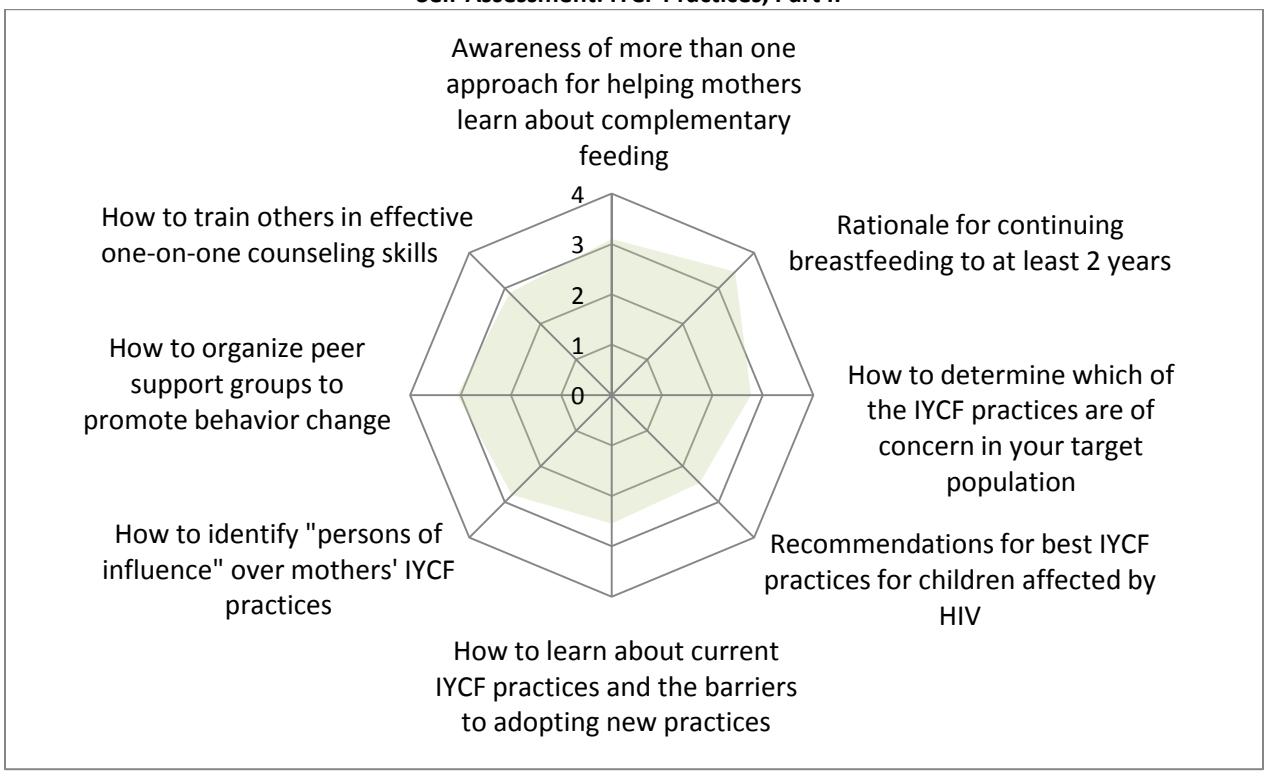
Summary Nutrition Self-Assessment by Core Competency Category



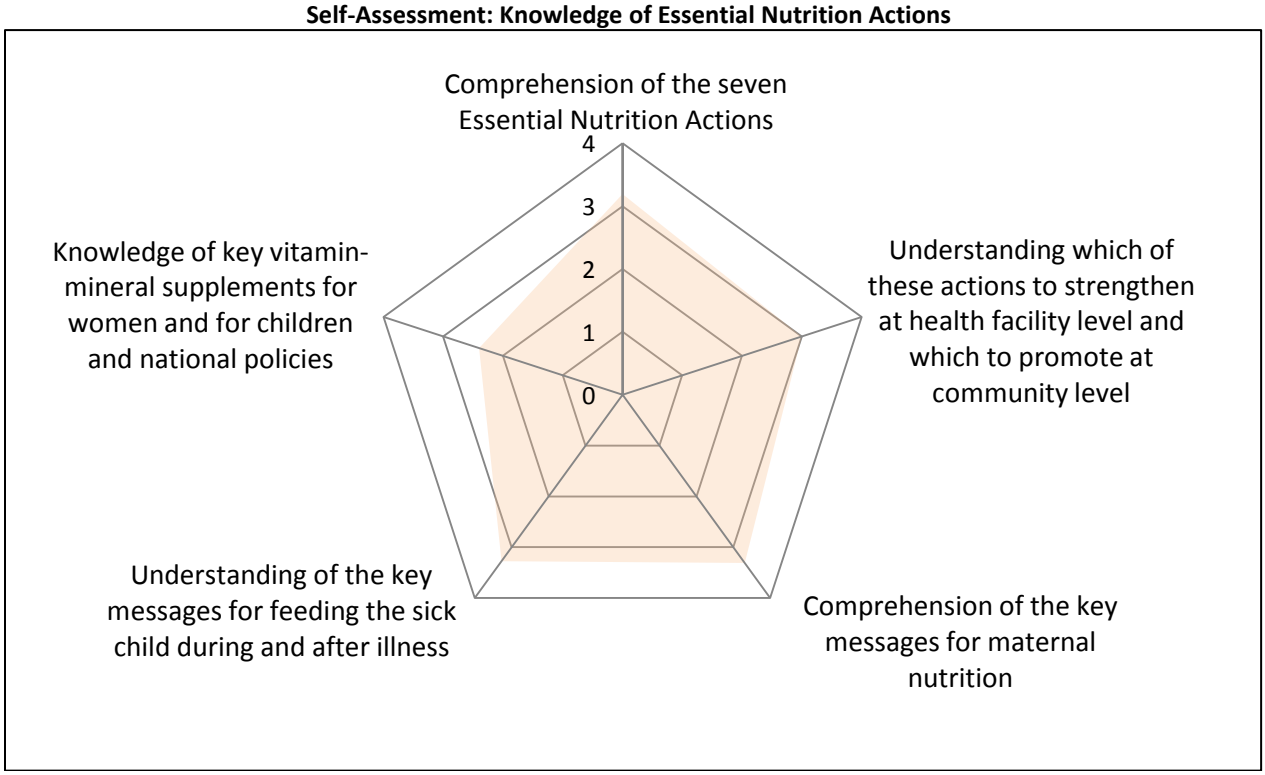
Self-Assessment: IYCF Practices, Part I



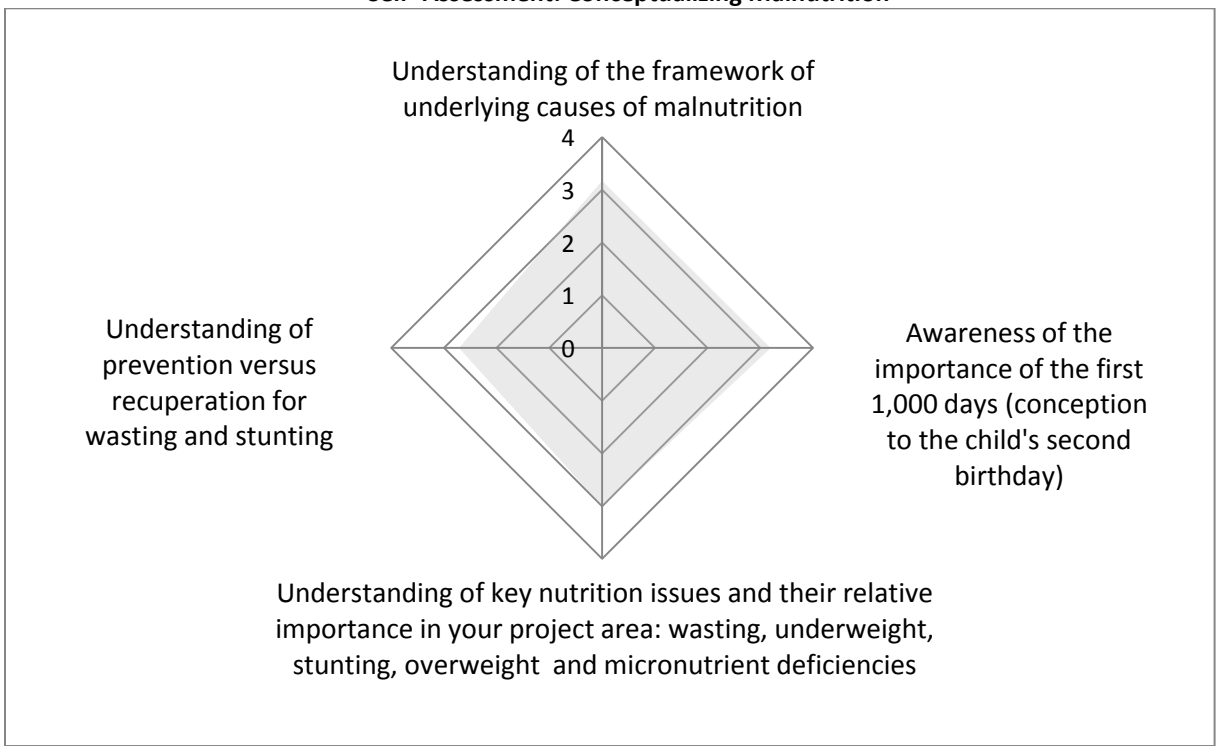
Self-Assessment: IYCF Practices, Part II



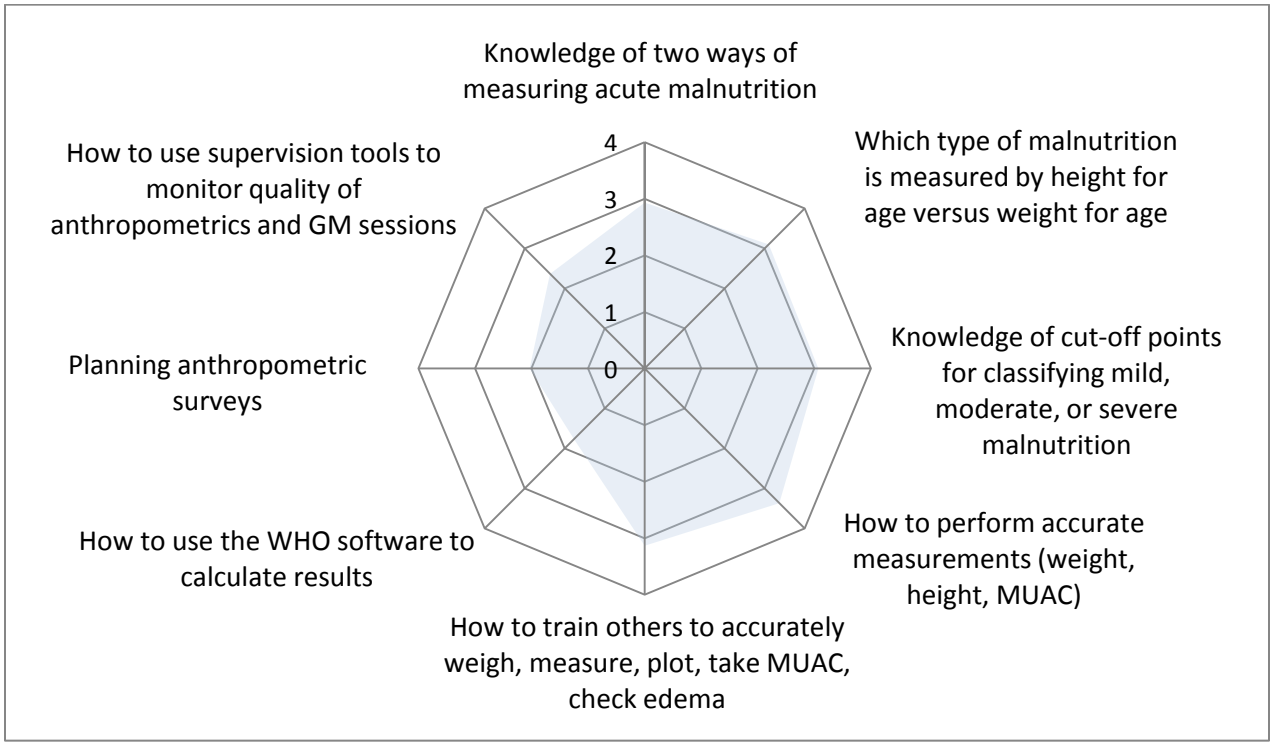
Self-Assessment: Knowledge of Essential Nutrition Actions



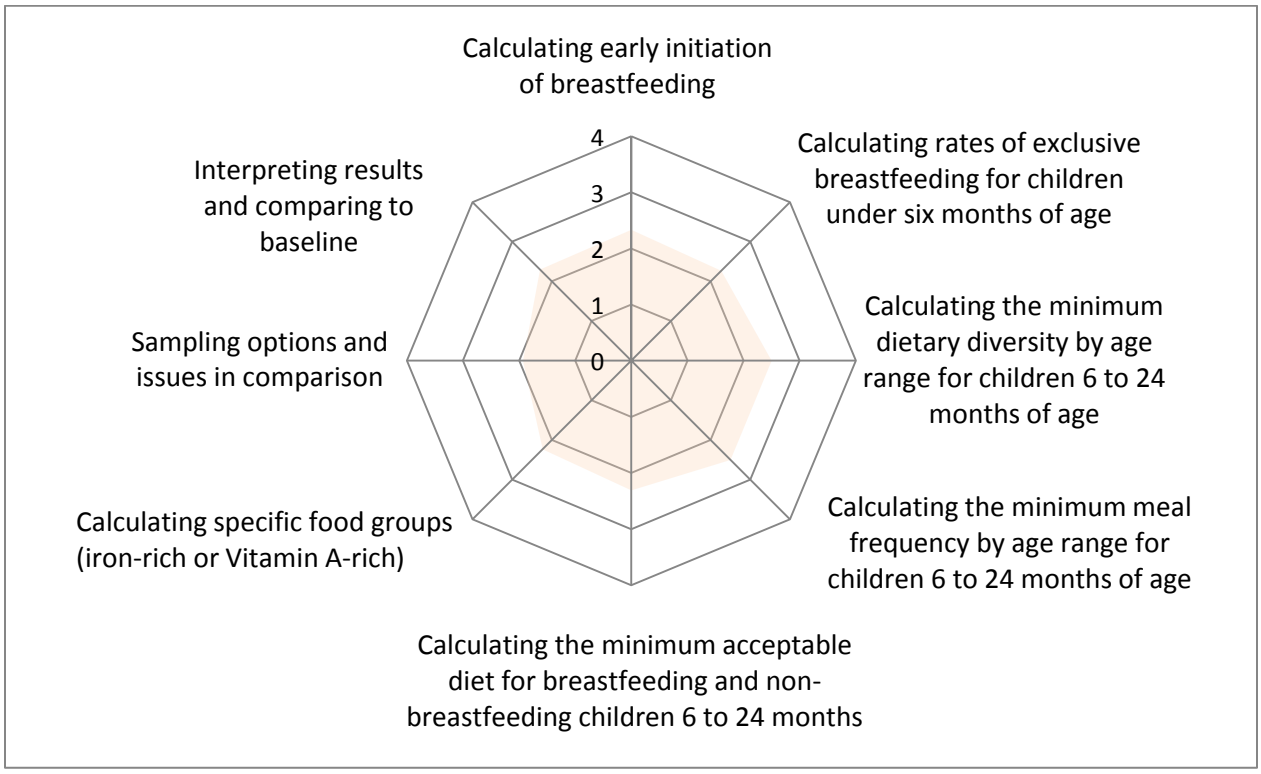
Self- Assessment: Conceptualizing Malnutrition



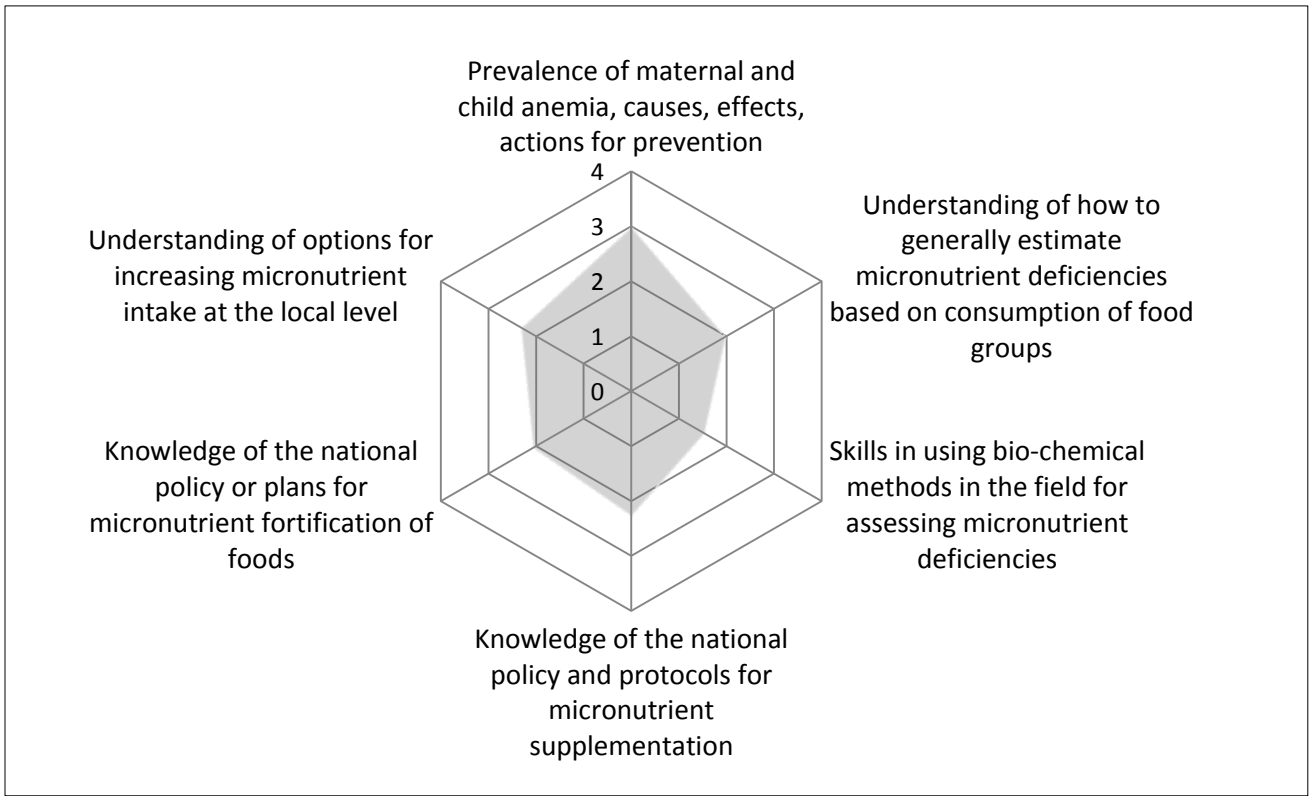
Self-Assessment: Nutritional Status



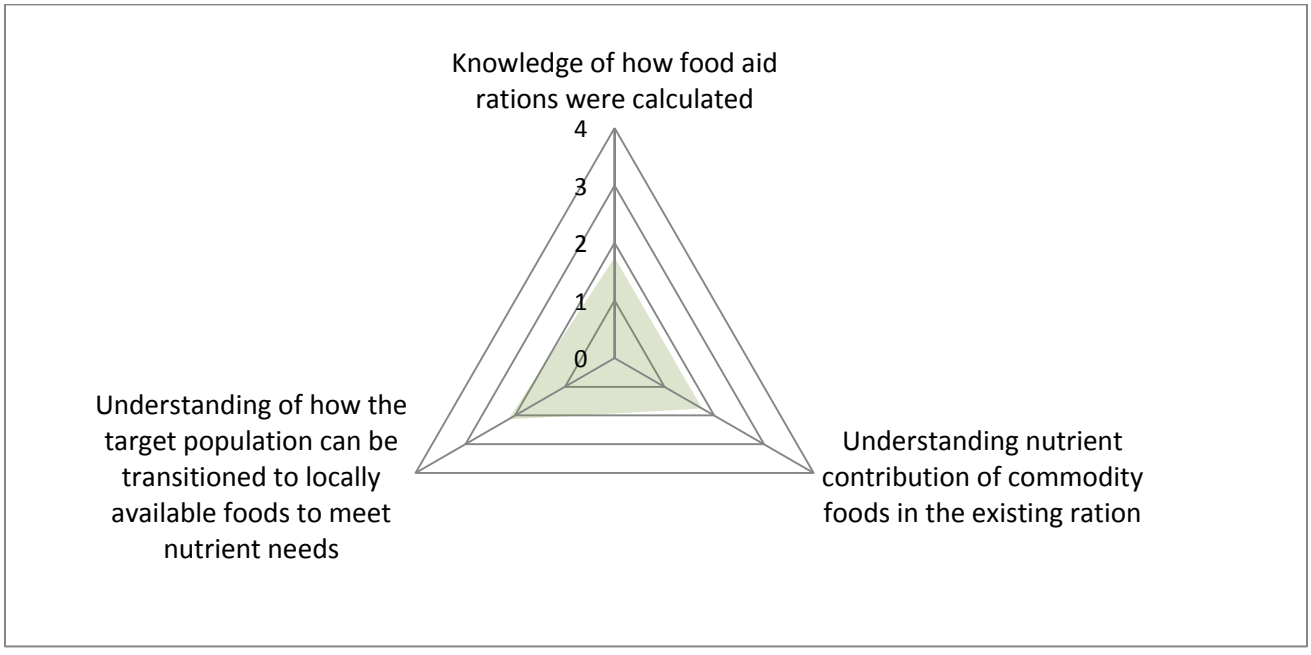
Self-Assessment: IYCF Indicators



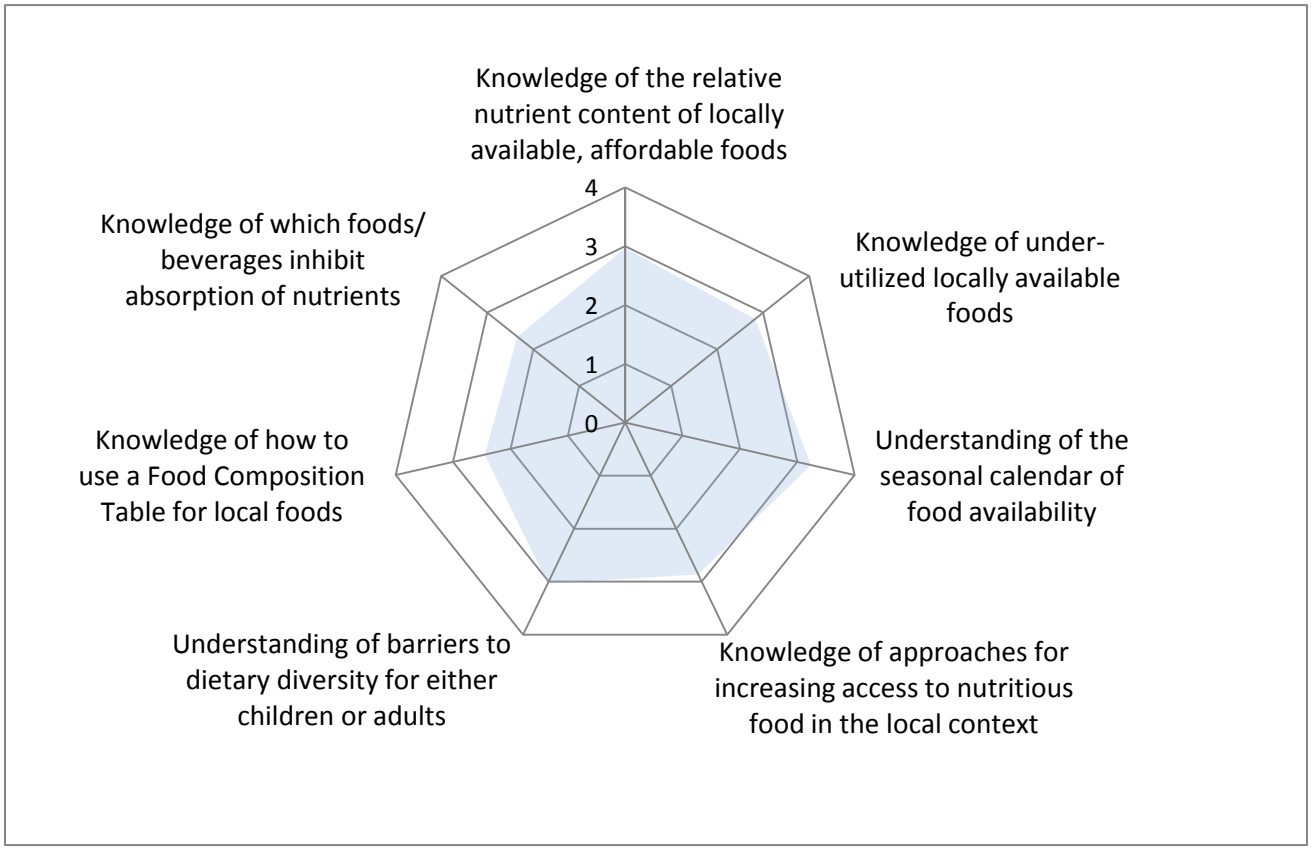
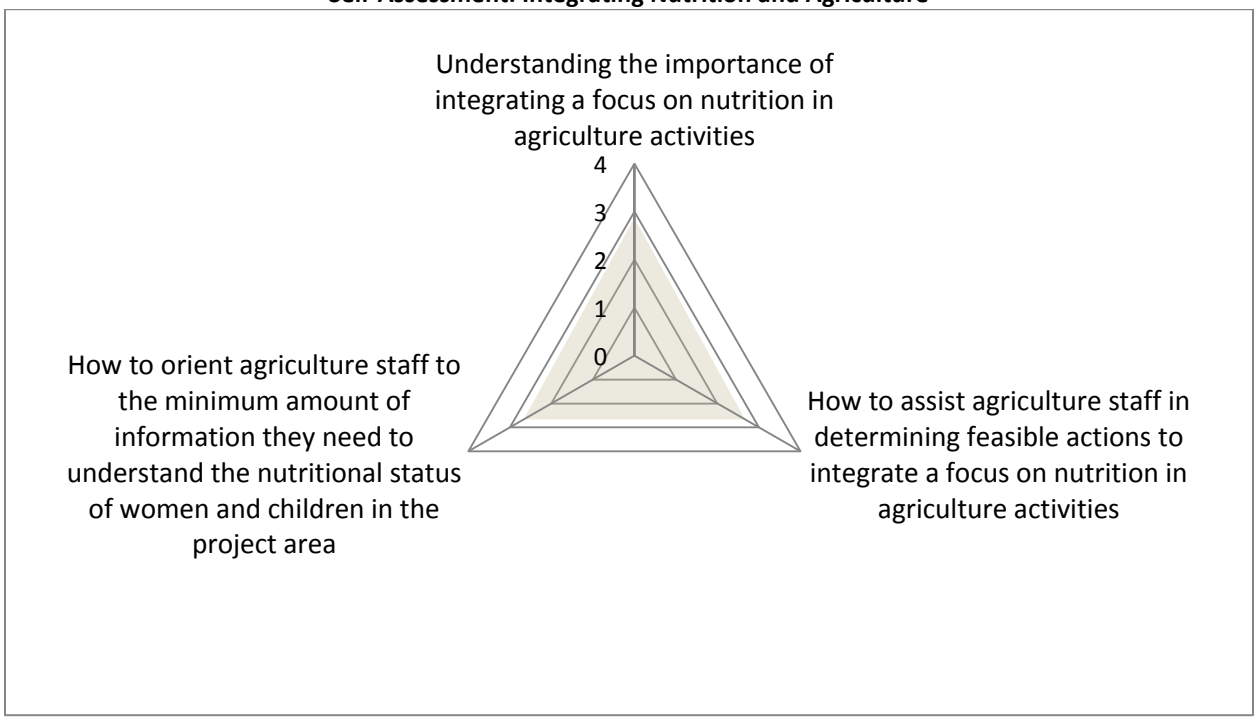
Self-Assessment: Micronutrients



Self-Assessment: Food Aid Commodities



Self-Assessment: Local Foods



Self-Assessment: Integrating Nutrition and Agriculture